AUGUST 2007
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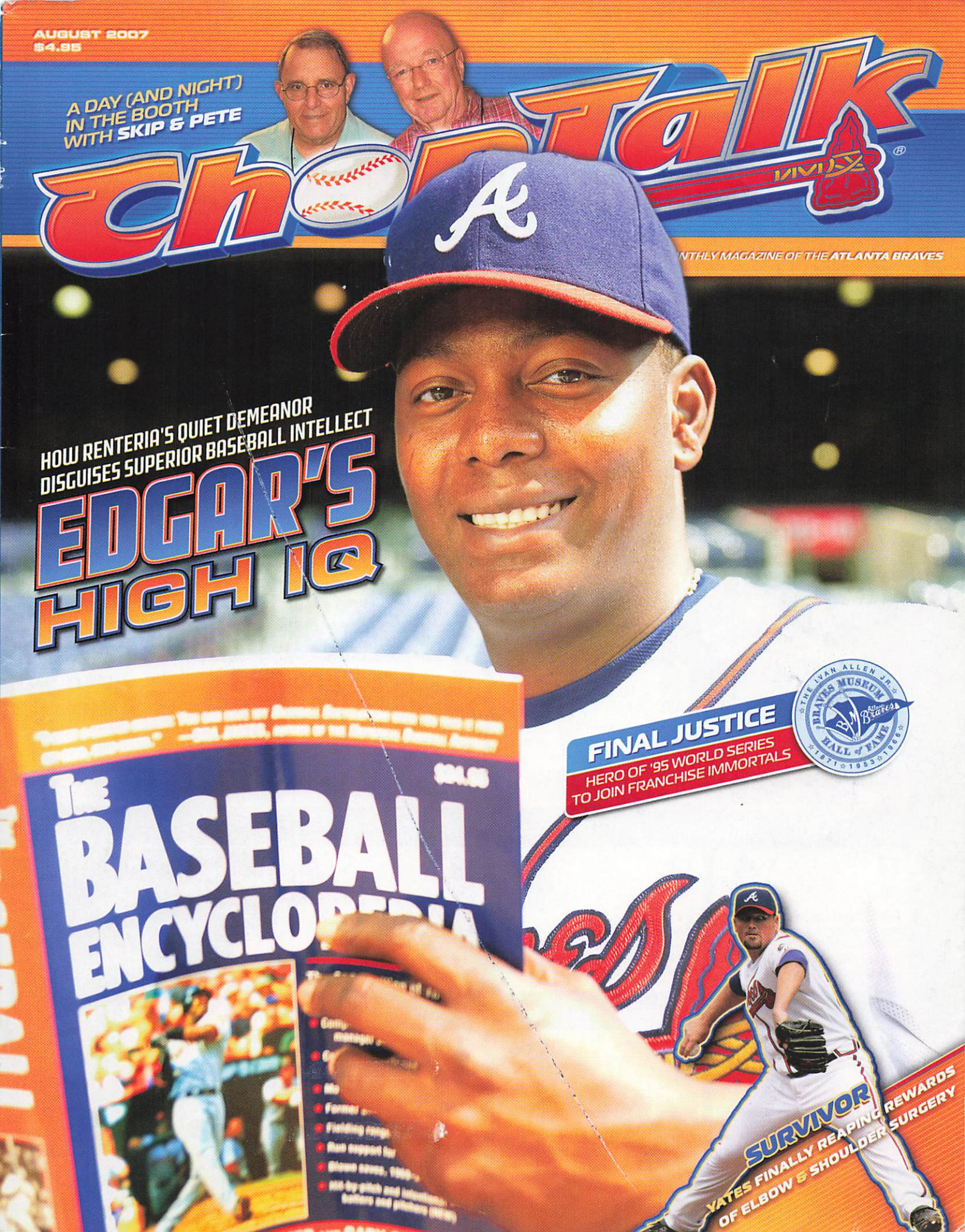
A DAY (AND NIGHT) IN THE BOOTH WITH SKIP & PETE

chopTalk

MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE ATLANTA BRAVES

HOW RENTERIA'S QUIET DEMEANOR DISGUISES SUPERIOR BASEBALL INTELLECT

EDGAR'S HIGH IQ



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Includes ticket in the Lexus Pavilion in right field. Menu is the Skip and Pete's Barbecue Package:
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• Peanuts • Popcorn • Coca-Cola, Diet Coke, Sprite and Dasani Water • Draft Budweiser and Bud Light

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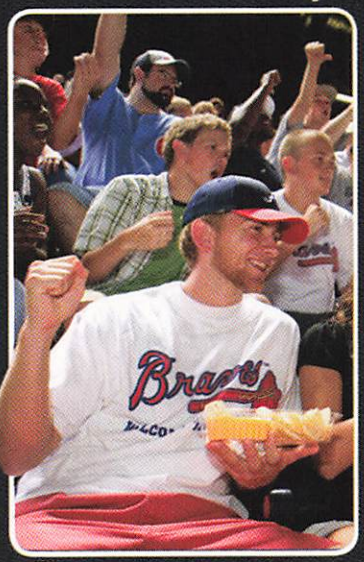
Groups of 25 or more can purchase tickets at 404.577.9100 and receive recognition on Tomahawk LED board during the game.
Tickets purchased day of game at ticket window will be $30 for Basic Package and $65 for BBQ & More Package.

AUGUST line-up



Braves (VS) Rockies | AUGUST 3rd, 4th, 5th

3 FRI — 7:35 PM
Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Enjoy fireworks after the game

4 SAT — 7:05 PM
Disco Night
'70s themed music and events

5 SUN — 1:05 PM
All-Star Sunday: Alumni appearances by Arnold Umbach and Marquis Grissom
Kids run the bases after the game
Baseball Card Day
Presented by Upper Deck

Braves (VS) Giants | AUGUST 14th, 15th, 16th

14 TUE — 7:35 PM
Law Enforcement Night
See law enforcement vehicles up close
2-for-1 ticket specials for law enforcement personnel
Coca-Cola 2-for-1 Tuesdays
Buy One Get One FREE Tickets

15 WED — 7:35 PM
McDonald's® Outfield Advantage
Buy One Get One FREE Tickets

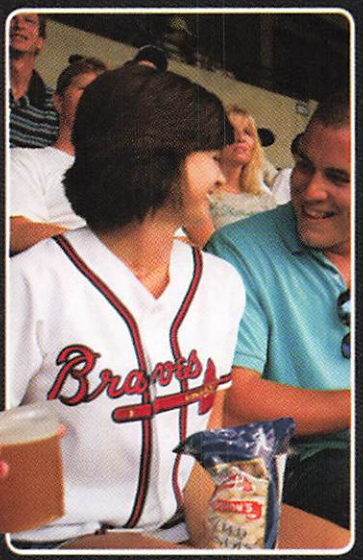
16 THU — 7:35 PM
Chipper Jones Statue Night
Presented by Coca-Cola to the first 15,000 fans
Topps Ticket Thursdays
Buy One Get One FREE Tickets

Braves (VS) Diamondbacks | AUGUST 17th, 18th, 19th

17 FRI — 7:35 PM
Hall Of Fame Induction
Induction of David Justice into the Braves Hall of Fame
Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Enjoy fireworks after the game

18 SAT — 7:05 PM
Elvis Night
Elvis themed music and events
Peanut butter and banana sandwiches and Blue Suede Shoes margaritas around the ballpark

19 SUN — 1:05 PM
All-Star Sunday
Alumni appearances by Zane Smith, Charlie Puleo, Tony Brizzolara and Brad Woodall
Kids run the bases after the game



Braves (VS) Mets | AUGUST 31st, SEPTEMBER 1st, 2nd

31 FRI — 7:35 PM
Braves Hat Night
Presented by Delta to the first 45,000 fans
Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Enjoy fireworks after the game

1 SAT — 3:55 PM
Latin Night
Latin bands and dance instructions in the Plaza
Food and drink specials around the ballpark

2 SUN — 1:05 PM
All-Star Sunday
Alumni appearances by Dale Murphy and Albert Hall
Kids run the bases after the game

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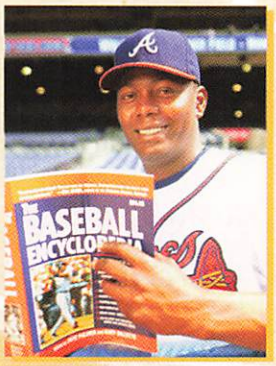
ALLISON SHIRREFFS

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

ATLANTA BRAVES



COVER CREDITS

EDGAR RENTERIA
by Allison Shirreffs

Skip Caray and
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Tyler Yates courtesy
of the Atlanta Braves

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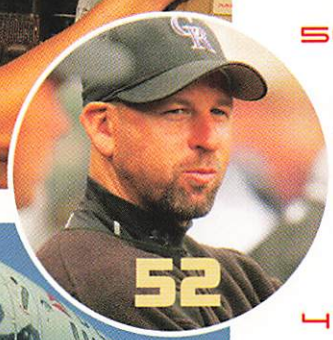

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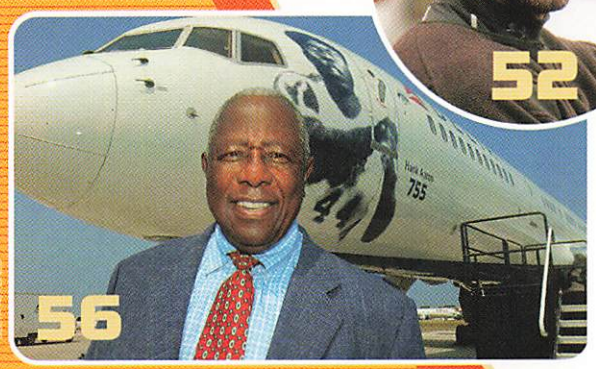

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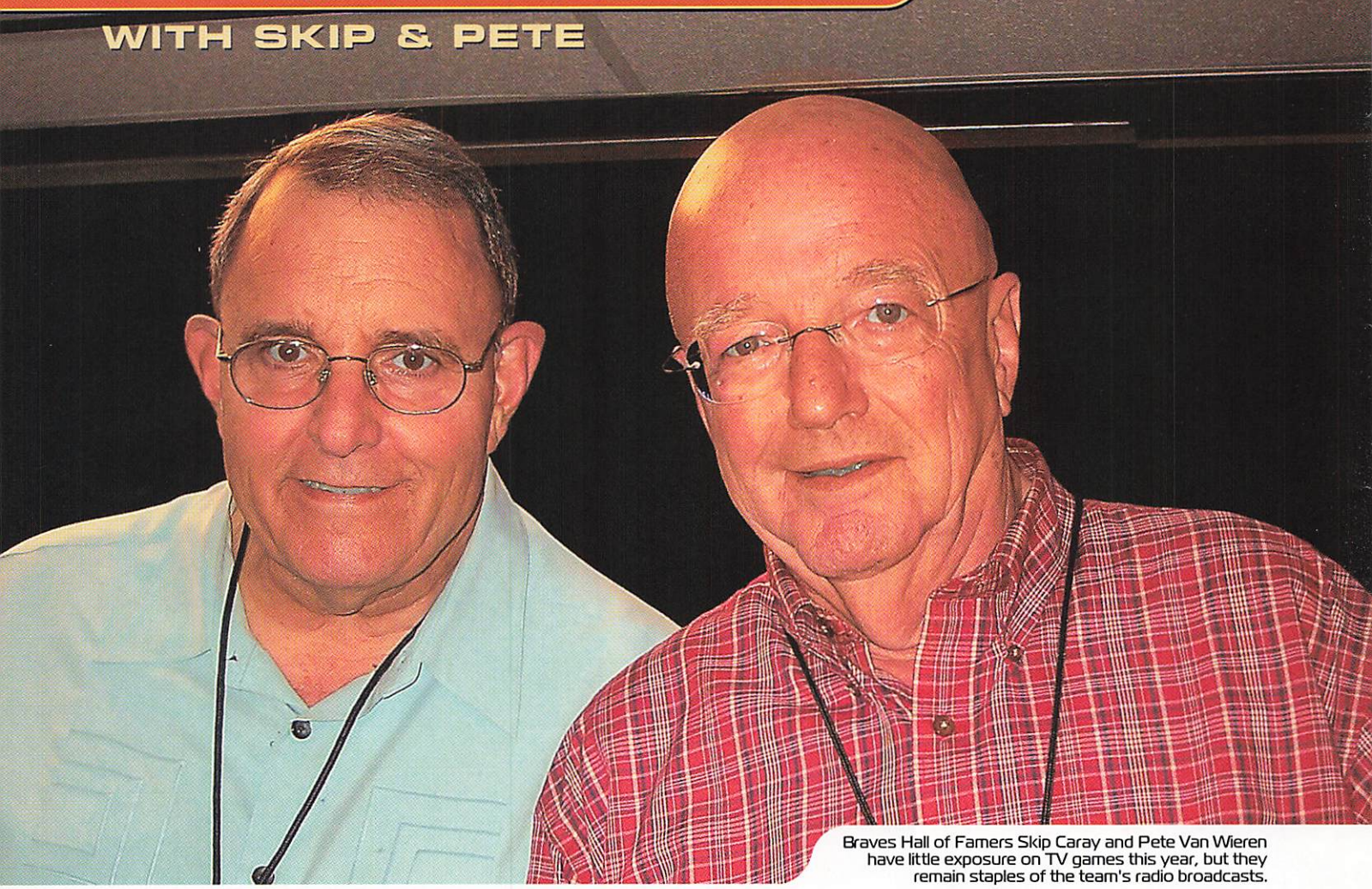
A DAY (AND NIGHT) IN THE BOOTH

WITH SKIP & PETE



Braves Hall of Famers Skip Caray and Pete Van Wieren have little exposure on TV games this year, but they remain staples of the team's radio broadcasts.

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

AFTER 32 YEARS of broadcasting Braves games together, Pete Van Wieren and Skip Caray have their routine down, seamlessly executing their act - pre-game, post-game and certainly during the game.

Though their flexibility, knowledge, and stamina were tested the day of the June 5 split doubleheader versus the Florida Marlins, by the end of the night, it was clear that Pete and Skip, like the players they cover, are true professionals who take pride in - and enjoyment out of - their jobs.

10:30 a.m.: Pete arrives at Turner Field by 10:30 a.m. for the first game, scheduled to begin at 2:35 p.m. He neatly stacks his Braves and Marlins media guides, Complete Baseball Record and Fact Book, and the 2007 Official Rule Book, on the right side of the desk where he sits during the game. Having learned that former Brave Clete Boyer died the night before, Pete looks up information for a tribute to the third baseman for the afternoon edition of "Diamond Notes," his regular contribution to pre-game programming.

11:30: Pete walks to the Braves' clubhouse, checks the line-up board, and heads to Bobby Cox's office to tape his pre-game comments. He's met by radio producer Jake Cook, who brings a microphone and portable recorder. Pete questions Cox about the Braves' loss to the Marlins the night before, and Cox talks about Tim Hudson's pitching and rookie Yunel Escobar going 4-for-4. By 11:40, Pete and Jake head back up to the booth where Jake will edit the interview to three minutes and Pete will tape "Diamond Notes."

11:45: Across the hall from the radio booth is a small office used by the broadcasters. "It's nothing fancy," says Pete. There are three desks - two with desktop computers - and a file cabinet in the corner. He tracks a number of websites for news about the team they're facing today and upcoming opponents. Among his favorite websites are ESPN.com, CBS.com, baseball.com and baseballnewstand.com. He returns to the booth to fill out the lineups in his scorebook and read "Baseball America."

Noon: Skip arrives and begins looking over and organizing the game notes prepared by both teams and filling in the lineups in his scorebook.

"This is a true story," says Skip. "The first year Joe Simpson began working with us, he pulled out his scorebook and started filling in the lineup - in pencil. I said, 'What are you doing? You're using a pencil!' It was a revelation to me! I'd used a pen all those years. Using a pencil opened a new vista to me for all the mistakes I make!" Not surprisingly, Pete, a.k.a. "The Professor," still uses a pen.

12:50 p.m.: Skip hops in a golf cart driven by Morgan Corbin, a management trainee in Braves Game Entertainment, to go to the Plaza where he'll greet fans at Skip & Pete's BBQ, a popular concession at Turner Field. Because of the mid-week day game, it's slow at the stand. Skip poses for pictures and signs several autographs before he and Corbin head back to the press box side of the stadium.

1:30: While Skip's at the Plaza, Pete tapes "Diamond Notes" for the second game, which will start at the regularly scheduled time, 7:35 p.m. The topic of Pete's second "Diamond Notes" is a comparison of past June drafts. Pete asks Skip about the size of the crowd in the plaza. "Today's take at the BBQ joint will not allow us to retire," says Skip, dryly, before he adjourns to the Press Dining Room to talk with his friend, John Donovan, a writer with SI.com.

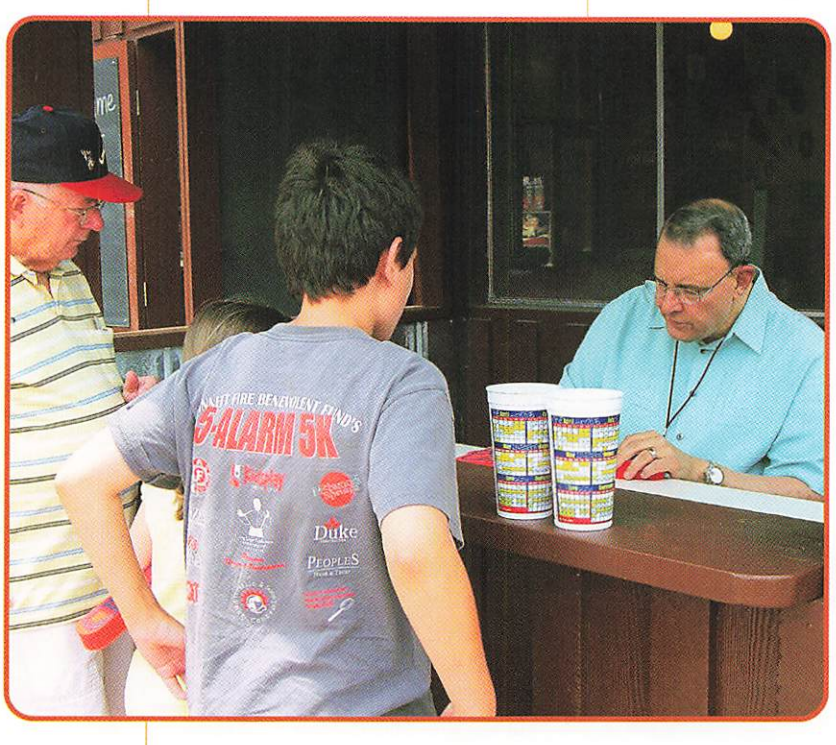
2:18: Back in the booth, the pre-recorded segments are running. A taped segment airs during the singing of the National Anthem because they don't want to talk over the anthem or, if it runs long, don't want to air only half of it. The division of labor during the game is based on who tapes the Bobby Cox Show interview. Whoever does the interview calls the first 2 1/2 innings. The other broadcaster delivers the "open" or greeting, the pitching matchups, and lineups. For the first game, since Pete taped the Bobby Cox segment, Skip will do the open and Pete will call the first 2 1/2 innings. Skip takes the next 2 1/2 innings, then Pete takes the next two and Skip the final two.

A light bulb labeled "GO" sits between Skip and Pete. A cord runs from the bulb back to the desk where Jake sits, higher up and in back of the two broadcasters. "I pull the cord, the 'GO' light comes on," says Jake. "It tells them when to go. It's kind of basic, but it works!" The booth is situated directly behind and above home plate. There are two monitors, one with the television feed, the other a closed-circuit feed from the bullpens.

2:30: "Standby!" commands Jake. Skip delivers the lineups. A "prompt" sheet at his elbow reminds him to say, "Game time temperature - 81 degrees. Game time temperature brought to you by Peachtree Heating and Air." The minutes tick down until 2:35 when Skip says, "...And leading it off with the play by play story, here's Pete Van Wieren..." Pete notes that the 24 doubles accumulated by Marlins second baseman Dan Uggla likely put him among the league leaders. He leafs through his notes to find the stat. The Professor strikes again. At the time, Uggla is tied with the Phillies Chase Utley at the top of the NL in doubles. Pete pauses to put his finger on the "cough" button while he clears his throat. After the top of the first, he says, "Only 17 1/2 more innings, and we'll be out of here!"

During the break, the two men chat casually. When it's time to come back from the break, Jake pulls the cord to flash the "GO" light - but it's not working. Skip motions for Pete to begin talking. "What happened to our little light?" asks Pete. "Jake has been derelict in his duties, as he so often is," jokes Skip. They banter about other baseball teams. Pete says, "It's hard to believe it's June 5th and the Yankees are in the cellar of the AL East." "They bought everything they needed, except pitching," replies Skip.

3:14: "We head to the bottom of the third, and here's Skip," says Pete. Skip compliments the performance by Marlins pitcher Sergio Mitre, making comments about his 2006 stats. During the break, Skip says, "You get spoiled sitting here. There's no one walking past you or passing beers down the row. You can see whatever you want to see." Pete leaves the booth briefly and returns with a small cup of soft serve ice cream.



Skip works on his "retirement account" - trying to boost BBQ sales by signing some autographs.

3:30: "Hope you're enjoying an afternoon of Braves baseball," says Skip. "If not, come back later and give us another chance tonight! This (game) is on a pace to be one of the fastest games of the year, but we're trapped! We can't go anywhere."

3:47: At the top of the sixth inning, Skip throws the play-by-play back to Pete and indicates with his fingers that two pitchers are warming up in the bullpen. Off the air, Pete says, "C'mon

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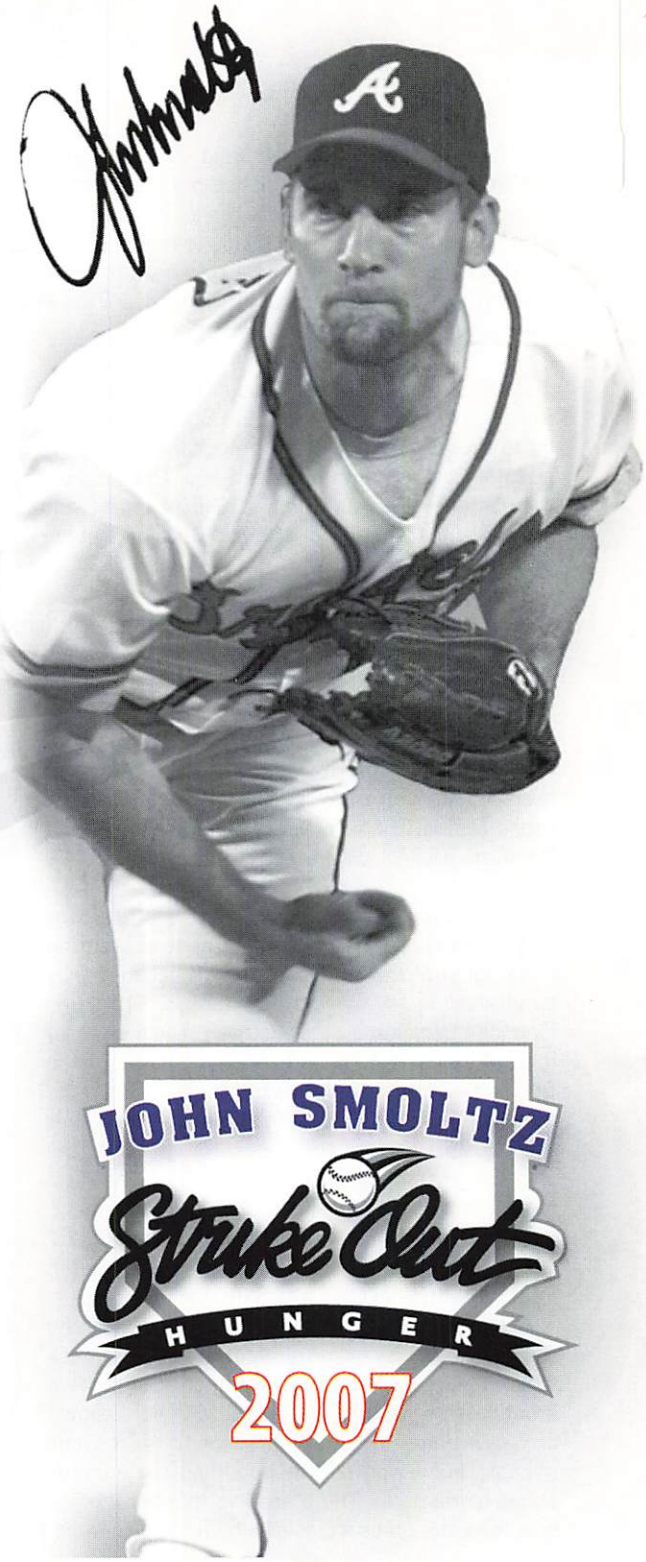
PHOTOS: PATTY RASMUSSEN

Strike Out Hunger!



Atlanta Braves pitcher John Smoltz knows it's important to build a better community. That's why John is helping the Atlanta Community Food Bank strike out hunger. We need your help too! You can help Georgians in need by joining John's Strike Out Hunger team. John is donating $100 to the Food Bank for every strikeout this season. And you can receive a sports item autographed by John for every pledge YOU make. As a special thank you for your donation and support, each paid pledge will receive a gift based on the pledge levels shown below. All gifts are tax deductible less the retail value of the item(s) received. All gifts will be autographed by John Smoltz.

Yes!

I will pledge $_____

Signed Gear		Total
Limited Edition Photograph	$ 25 ___	$___
Baseball Cap	$ 75 ___	$___
Baseball	$ 150 ___	$___
Official Bat	$ 400 ___	$___
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Official Smoltz Braves Jersey	$1250___	$___
All items are	$2500___	$___

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Address:_____

City:_____ State:_____ Zip:_____

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The Strike Out Hunger season begins with the Braves opening home game and ends with the final regular season home game. All items based on availability and will be sent to you at the close of the Braves season and upon receipt of payment.

For more information call 404-892-FEED ext.1246. Or visit ACFB.org

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boys, you're getting the game of (Buddy) Carlyle's life! You've gotta score some runs for him."

4:18: Finally, in the bottom of the seventh inning, the Braves score when Jarrod Saltalamacchia hits a two-run home run off reliever Renyel Pinto. "If the Braves hold on, Carlyle could be the winning pitcher," says Pete. Pinch-hitter Chris Woodward comes in and promptly hits a home run that barely clears the left-field wall. The score is, 3-1, Braves. Just as Matt Diaz is announced, hitting for Carlyle, Pete says, "And it's starting to rain... where did that come from?"

4:30: Skip has the call in the top of the eighth, but lightning flashes in the distance. Three minutes later, the skies open and play is halted. "The tarp is coming out," says Pete. Former Braves second baseman Mark Lemke enters the booth with local radio host Mitch Evans. They update listeners on other baseball news and the progress of the rain delay. During the delay, Pete and Skip head to the Press Dining Room, along with many other members of the media. Fortunately, the rain doesn't last long, and 26 minutes later, at 4:59, play resumes, and Skip picks up where he left off.

5:08: Bob Wickman enters the game in the top of the ninth inning, and Skip announces the attendance: 20,863. As Wickman paws at the pitcher's mound, Ed Mangan and his grounds crew scurry to the mound, carrying rakes and a large tool to tamp the clay. Skip and Pete begin to call play-by-play on the grounds crew. Wickman pronounces the mound good to go. "Jake tells me that was a six-minute mound delay," cracks Skip.

5:22: Wickman strikes out the last batter. "Braves win it, 3-1," says Skip. "Totals and highlights after this..." The time of game is 2 hours, 20 minutes with a 26-minute rain delay. The next game is scheduled to begin in two hours.

5:44: As they tape the Bobby Cox Show for the second game, Cox tells Skip that despite the fact that Carlyle pitched beautifully, he will be sent to Richmond. It's an administrative move more than anything else. If John Smoltz, who has been nursing a sore shoulder, needs to miss a start, they'll recall Carlyle.

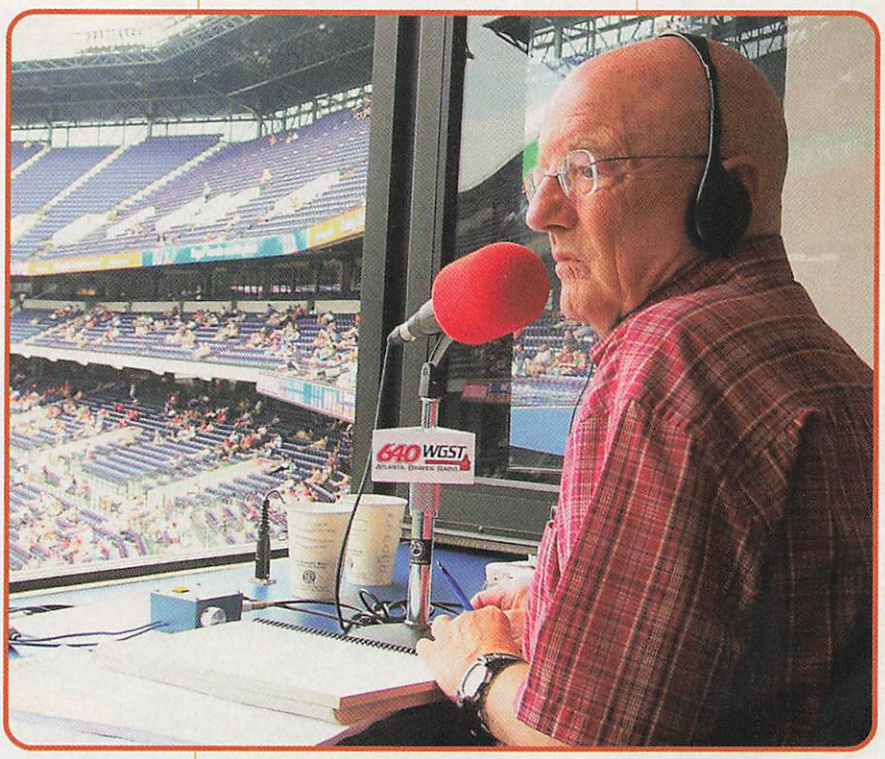
7:18: Pete starts the open, reading the lineups, before throwing the play-by-play to Skip at 7:35. "The night is clear and comfortable after the rain," says Skip. "It's a beautiful night for baseball. Smoltz asks for another baseball and gets it, but gives up a home run to Miguel Cabrera. "John should have stuck with the first baseball," says Skip.

7:49: Jake calls out a Phillies-Mets score for Pete to give over the air. Pete and Skip talk about the late Clete Boyer for a few minutes. As Smoltz takes all three pitches while up to bat, Skip tells the audience that Smoltz told him during the break between games that he was concerned about further injuring his pinky finger by swinging the bat while hitting.

8:26: Marlins 22-year-old rookie Rick Vanden Hurk is no-hitting the Braves in the bottom of the fourth inning. Pete notes that you have to mention the no-hitter to let people know what's happening. "You mean not everyone keeps score?" asks Skip.

8:45: In the bottom of the sixth inning, Skip says, "...And the no-hitter continues." One inning later, Yunel Escobar's sharply hit double breaks it up.

9:23: In the eighth inning, the broadcasters get punchy, joking with each other. With the score, 5-0, Pete sips a cup of coffee while Skip puts his glasses on backwards. Immediately afterward, Matt Diaz gets a hit. "Rally glasses," says Skip. Kelly Johnson gets an RBI single for the only Braves run of the night.



For 32 seasons, Pete's been calling Braves games - exactly what he began dreaming of when he was a young boy.

10:02: It's over, and the Marlins win, 5-1. The time of game is 2 hours, 27 minutes. Pete chuckles, "Tomorrow at 12:45, we'll broadcast our third Bobby Cox Show in a 24-hour span."

10:30: Pete, who's been at Turner Field for 12 hours, and Skip, who's been there for 10 hours, head to their cars in the Media Parking Lot for their respective 30-minute drives home. Asked whether the routine ever gets old, Pete smiles, shakes his head, and answers simply, "Not many people get to do exactly what they wanted to do when they were 8 years old."

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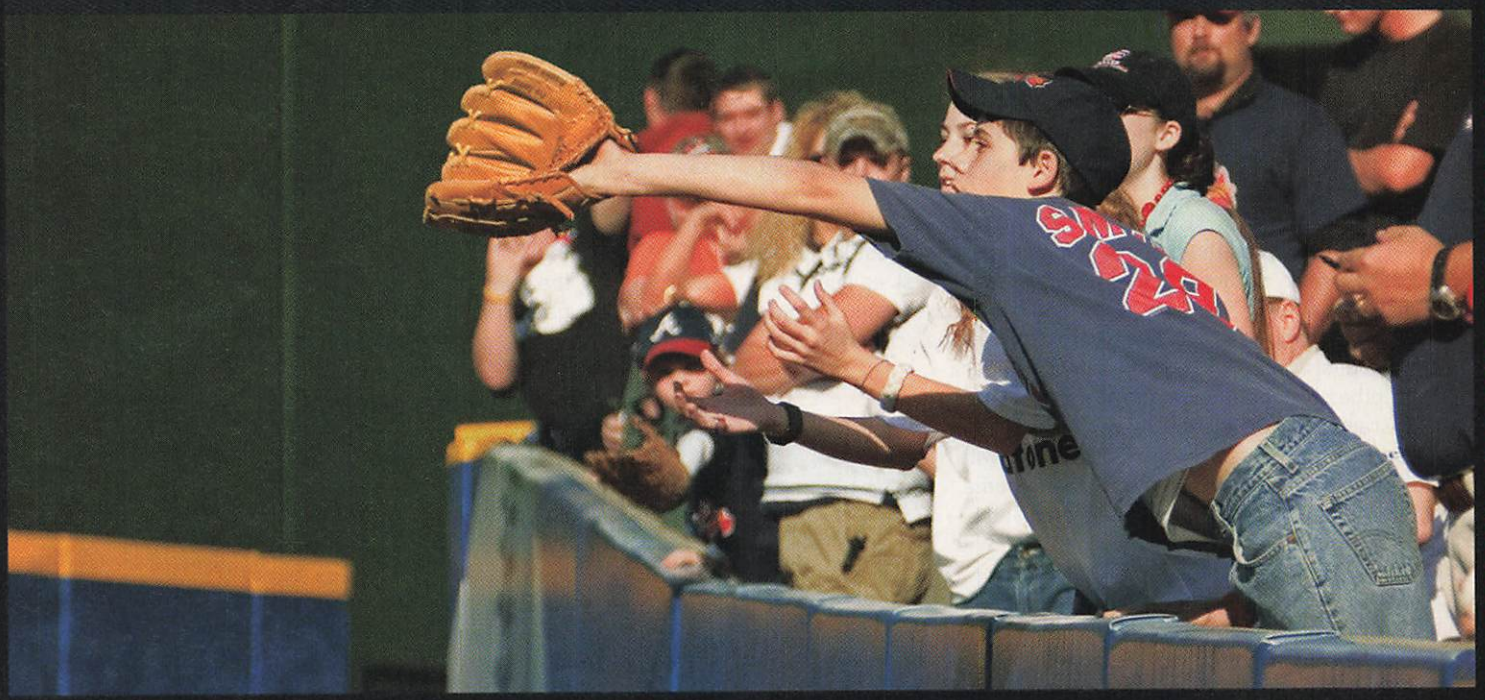

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PAINTING THE CORNERS

BY JAY BUSBEE

HOW TO KEEP SCORE ON THE PAIN OF REALITY

SO THIS IS WHAT everybody else has been going through for the past 15 years.

We didn't want to believe it last year, didn't want to believe that the Braves could actually miss the post-season. But it happened! And now, after the buzzsaw of interleague play, we're starting to realize just how tough it is to make the post-season once, to say nothing of 14 straight times.

Folks, this is the kind of thing that makes fainthearted fans turn away from the game. But you're not afraid of a little competition, are you? A little uncertainty that maybe this season won't turn out exactly like we want it?

We need to meet this new world head-on. So, I propose we quantify our pain, using the classic sports metaphor of the gut punch.

A Gut-Punch Factor of "1" means you'll stay frustrated halfway through the Seinfeld rerun that follows the game. A "4" will stick with you through lunch tomorrow. And a "10" means you're ready to put your head through the drywall. (For comparative purposes, the Leyritz homer in '96 was a 23.)

Of course, even Gut Punches stop hurting after awhile. (I find a trip to the Varsity helps.) And like Yogi Berra used to say, "It ain't over 'til it's over." So for each Gut Punch, we'll give you a Reason for Hope.

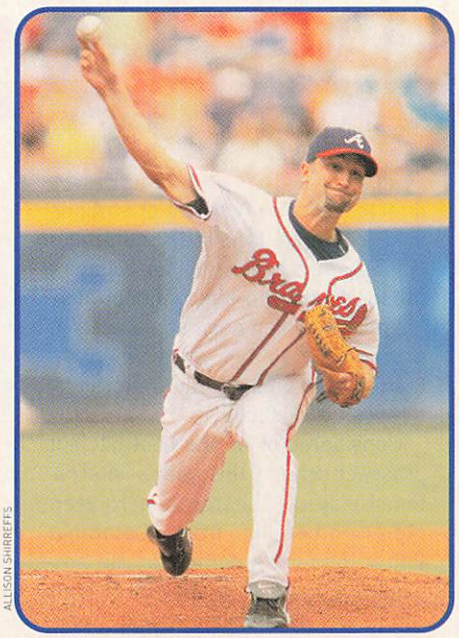
Here we go. Don't worry - our fears grow smaller if we meet them face-to-face:

Andruw. Oh, boy. Right about the time I declared Andruw on the way out of his slump in this space last month, he turned what had been a funk into a full-fledged depression. And his Amish-looking jawline beard isn't making him any more attractive to the baseballs, which are avoiding his bat like it was infected.

Gut-Punch Factor: "5" with every out. "8" if runners are on board.

Reason for Hope: Andruw's too good to look this overmatched for an entire season. The breakout is coming. It's coming. Really.

The starting pitching. The Braves' weaknesses here are a particularly cruel irony. Their one-time fourth and fifth starters, guys like Kevin Millwood and Denny Neagle, would be challenging for at least the second slot now. That's less a knock on the current rotation than admiration for the depth of those classic staffs of the '90s.



ALLISON SHIRREFFS

Buddy Carlyle has come seemingly from out of nowhere to help piece together the rotation.

Still, we're spoiled: "What do you mean, Atlanta doesn't own the first five innings of every game anymore?"

Gut-Punch Factor: "2" when Smoltz is starting. Add "1" for every earned run allowed.

Reason for Hope: Smoltz. Hudson. Throw in Chuckie J and an out-of-nowhere Buddy Carlyle, and suddenly you've got yourself a decent rotation. It's no Glavine-Maddux-Smoltz-Millwood circa '98, but then… what is?

The bats. The Braves' bats run like a NASCAR auto, either flying wide-open or flipped-over and stuck in the infield. You never can tell which way this team is going to hit - mashing the ball like the '27 Yankees, small-balling runners around the infield, or flailing like a blindfolded birthday boy swinging at a piñata.

Gut-Punch Factor: "7" when they're waving like a parade queen at pitches.

Reason for Hope: Because you never know when they'll bust out one of those double-digit-hit performances and put away the game before the fourth inning.

The closers. These guys are always the equivalent of the kicker in the NFL. If they're in late in the game, there's not a whole lot of margin for error. While we're a long way from 2006, when nothing short of a 10-run lead was safe, we've still had some agonizing meltdowns, culminating in the June 30 debacle where both Wickman and Soriano coughed up runs in a loss to the Marlins.

Gut-Punch Factor: "3" if they allow runs. "8" if they surrender the lead.

Reason for Hope: This isn't 2006. Wickman and Soriano are going to be just fine, and guys like Tyler Yates are coming along nicely.

The fans. "Hey, wait a second," you're thinking, "don't bring us into this." True, you're doing your job by reading ChopTalk, and we thank you. But we've got to do something about the bandwagon-jumping fans that wear Red Sox caps even though they've never been within 500 miles of Fenway Park.

Gut-Punch Factor: "3." "7" when the Red Sox or Cubs are in town.

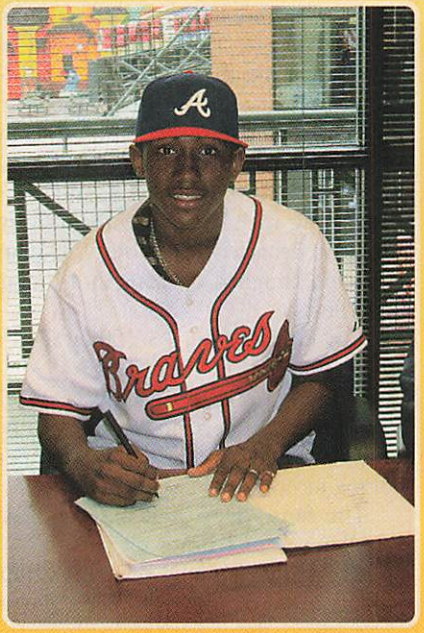
> "THE BRAVES' BATS RUN LIKE A NASCAR AUTO, EITHER FLYING WIDE-OPEN OR FLIPPED-OVER AND STUCK IN THE INFIELD."

Reason For Hope: As long as there are, what, 4 million people in Atlanta, there's always hope that one percent of them will see the light and show up for a ballgame. Heck, bring one along yourself.

So there you have it. Good news following bad. Thing is, maybe this uncertainty isn't a bad thing. Maybe we need a little rain to fall in our lives now and then. Maybe we could do with a few seasons of not knowing whether we even have a chance to make the post-season. Maybe we deserve a few gut punches.

Naaaaah.

COLUMBIAN CATCH



ATLANTA BRAVES

Only 16 years old, Julio Teheran already throws as hard as 91 mph and was one of the most-sought-after prospects in the world.

JOHNNY ALMARAZ, the Braves' director of Latin America operations, said in March that the organization was pursuing several top pitching prospects for the international signing period, which began on July 2. He proved true to his word when the team signed pitcher Julio Teheran for a reported $850,000.

Considered to be the best pitching prospect among this year's international players, Teheran is a 16-year-old righthander from Colombia, Edgar Renteria's homeland. He possesses a fastball in the 88-91 mph range and an above-average curveball. Teheran's best pitch is a devastating changeup.

"We feel that Julio is the best international pitching prospect (available) this year," Almaraz said. "He has outstanding makeup, and the combination of his pitching ability and the quality of his pitches made him one of the top pitching prospects we've seen in a while."

Teheran, who signed his contract at Turner Field on July 2, was courted heavily by several teams, most notably the Yankees. The Yankees reportedly offered Teheran more money than the Braves, but the pitcher and his family decided to sign with Atlanta because of the confidence Almaraz instilled in them during the scouting process.

According to Almaraz, the Braves have interest in several other international players, but are focusing on quality instead of quantity.

"Our approach (with international players) is the same as the one we use in the draft," Almaraz said. "The Braves want players with a combination of superior makeup and talent. That's why we are so excited about the signing of Teheran, who is one of the top pitching prospects I've seen in some time."

- BILL BALLEW

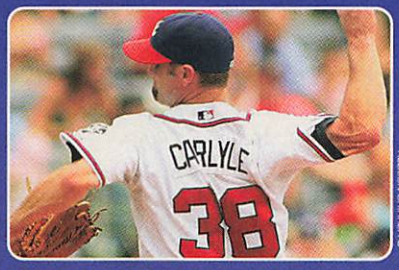
CARD ART

YOU DON'T have to be a longtime Braves fan to recognize the face on this 1965 Topps regular issue (#200). As manager of the Yankees, Joe Torre's face is one of the most recognizable in baseball. But long before he became keeper of the Bronx Zoo and long before he managed the Braves (1982-84), Torre was an outstanding player, mainly for the Braves and Cardinals, who compiled a .297 batting average and hit 252 home runs in 18 seasons.

One of the many distinctions in Torre's long career, and one that's been in the news recently, is that he was the Braves catcher when Warren Spahn won his 300th game in 1960, and he was the Yankees manager when Roger Clemens won his 350th game - the only pitcher since Spahn to attain that level.

This 1965 Topps series is distinguished by the pennant design that carries the team name. Check with your local card dealers (consult the Yellow Pages) or do an internet search to shop for this and other Braves cards for your collection.

A PERFECT NINE



ALLISON SHIRREFFS

JOHN SMOLTZ, the Atlanta strikeout king, never did it, nor did Phil Niekro, the Braves franchise strikeout leader. For that matter, neither did Tom Glavine, Greg Maddux, Warren Spahn, Lou Burdette, Johnny Sain or any of the other great Braves pitchers in the modern era (post 1900).

Enter Buddy Carlyle.

On July 6 at San Diego, the right-handed journeyman performed a pitcher's dream - at least the one-inning version. Carlyle struck out the side in the fourth inning on the minimum of nine pitches. In so doing, he performed one of the rarest of all baseball feats.

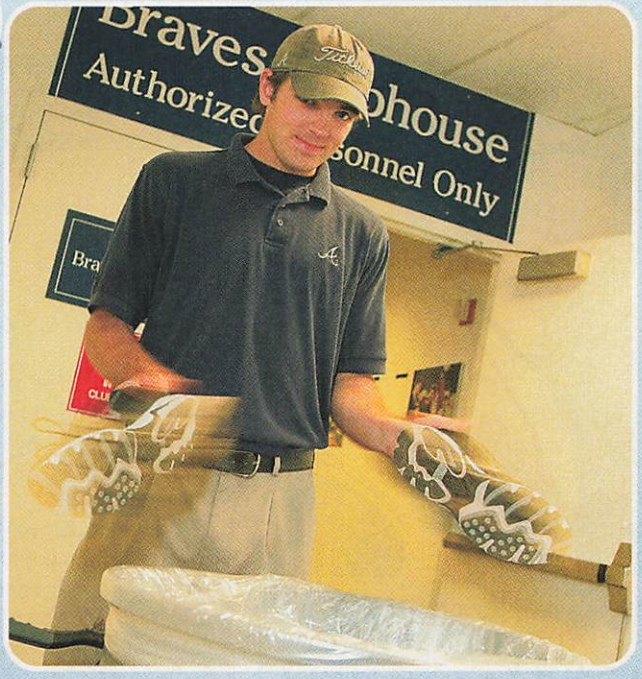
Carlyle was the third Brave to do it - but you have to go back to 1921 to find that Joe Oeschger, who won 20 games that season but only 82 in his career, was the last Brave (Boston) to strike out the side on nine pitches. The only other time it took place in franchise history was in 1889 when John Clarkson - a Hall of Famer - did it for the Boston Beaneaters.

Carlyle struck out Khalil Greene looking, then got Russell Branyan and Jose Cruz swinging. Though he's not generally an overpowering pitcher, some of Carlyle's pitches registered 94 miles per hour in that inning and at other times in that game, in which he went eight innings to beat the Padres, 7-4.

"I had no idea what I'd done until after the game," said Carlyle. "I was amazed when I heard how little it's been done. It's not like I threw nine perfect pitches. They took some pitches down the middle, and they swung at some bad pitches. But I'll take it - I'll take any inning when they don't score runs, no matter how I get the outs!"

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

CLEAN PLAYERS, SHOES



ALLISON SHIRREFFS

AFTER PLAYING nine innings, the Braves enter the clubhouse with dirt and mud covering their shoes. By the time they next take the field again, those same shoes look almost as good as new. Two members of the Braves clubhouse staff - usually Dustin Mooring and Jason Pociask (above) - make sure this happens.

Following the game, the "clubbies" first grab all the players' and coaches' shoes and place them near the center of the clubhouse. One of them knocks the bottoms together 5-10 times to get as much dirt off as possible. Next, he takes a brush and cleans the bottom of the shoes. He then tosses them to his co-worker, who sprays some cleanser and wipes them down with a damp towel. Then they return the shoes to the appropriate lockers.

The clubbies repeat this process after every game. Perfection is not the goal. Since they know the shoes won't stay clean for long, they mainly strive to leave the metal spikes free of dirt and grass.

Weather conditions impact how long the job takes. Day games require less cleaning time. The sun bakes the field dry, which prevents dirt from building up on the shoes. In these conditions, it may take just 5-10 minutes to complete the task.

"Day games don't take long because usually the bottoms of the shoes don't have anything on them," said Mooring. "But if it's really wet outside, the bottoms get really dirty.

"Sometimes when it's cold, the clay sort of freezes on the spikes, so it's even harder to get it off. Then it takes upwards of 15-20 minutes to get them all done."

Which Braves get their shoes the dirtiest? Chipper Jones has earned that distinction. The infielders usually leave their shoes in the worst condition, along with whichever pitchers worked the game.

- STEVE FALL

PLAYING PEPPER

KELLY JOHNSON

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

INTERVIEW BY JON COOPER

CHOPTALK You recently proposed to your long-time girlfriend, Lauren Thacker. How does it feel to be engaged?
KELLY JOHNSON It's always nice to have somebody on your side, every day, no matter how bad things are going, someone who loves you. She's somebody that I can always count on.

CT How did you propose, and where?
JOHNSON We went to our favorite restaurant (Horseradish Grill). We had the day off here, so we were just kind of hanging out at my house. It became pretty emotional and really intense. I was in tears and somehow got it out, and she said, "Yes!"

CT Did you take a knee?
JOHNSON We were kind of already on a knee. It was emotional, and in the process of getting it out, we were in each other's arms. We couldn't stand and didn't have anywhere to sit. So...

CT Did she know it was coming?
JOHNSON I think so. We talked about [getting married] a lot. I couldn't be any happier in the way it worked out. It was definitely a very real moment. Nothing planned, nothing too over-the-top, and nothing that I think was too hokey or cheesy. The wedding is going to be here (Atlanta). We've got a couple of places picked out, and I think the date is going to be in late January.

Johnson reached base via hit or walk in 63 of his first 72 starts this year, and ranked eighth in the NL in walks.

CT You don't want it to conflict with the playoffs?
JOHNSON No, and I don't want to sneak in before some of the other guys that have already been engaged.

CT Like the Braves, you endured a tough stretch in June but hit your way out of it. Do you change your approach during a slump?
JOHNSON You have to stay the same to get through it, because there are patterns. Sometimes no matter what you do, no matter how good you feel, you're going to go 0-for, and you're not going to get any hits. That's just the way it happens. We're all very good hitters, everybody in the big leagues. Sometimes you're going to have those stretches where you're not so lucky and you can't change anything.

> "I'M JUST NOT A VERY GOOD HITTER AT TURNER FIELD SO FAR. MAYBE THE SECOND HALF WILL BE BETTER."

CT Before moving down in the batting order, you were around the top 10 in the majors among leadoff hitters in on-base percentage. How much of that do you attribute to your disciplined approach?
JOHNSON I like to take pitches because I feel I get more into a rhythm of each at-bat. I don't like giving away at-bats, and I don't like going up there and not feeling comfortable and not feeling like I know what the pitcher is going to throw and making a first-pitch out. So, I end up taking a lot more pitches. I feel like it gives me a better chance. That's just me. It works out a lot of times where I can get on base by a walk or maybe work myself into a count where I can get a better pitch to hit. There are guys who like to swing and feel like their best opportunity is if they're swinging and putting the bat on the ball. I feel like I need more of the pitch that I can hit rather than just anything that's close.

CT You're also among NL leaders in two-out RBIs. To what do you attribute your success in that area?
JOHNSON I don't know. Over the course of my career, coming up, I don't know if I've been all that great at two-out RBIs. To have success at that finally is one of the things that I'm most proud of and hopefully I can keep that going for the rest of my career.

CT How do you explain your success with runners in scoring position and two out versus the same situation and less than two out?
JOHNSON Maybe it's something with the pitchers and how they're feeling, or it could just be the certain pitchers that are throwing in those situations where there are less than two outs. You could be facing guys like [Johan] Santana or [Josh] Beckett or some of the best. The other times I could be facing a reliever. It could be anything. Like I said, any time you're driving in runs with your basehits, that's something to be proud of as a hitter, because it's not sac-flys, it's not a walk with the bases loaded. You're actually getting a hit with guys out there, and that's tough to do. There's a lot of pressure on everybody up there when there are guys on base. You'd like to think that you focus and bear down, but we should be focusing and bearing down all the time. So that may not be it, but if it is, that's great.

CT Another curious disparity is your higher batting average on the road than at home. Why do you think that is?
JOHNSON I've been trying to figure that one out the whole season. I don't know if it's a routine I have. I have a lot more errands. I get a lot more things done at home. I'm more active in the mornings, whereas on

the road, I'm waking up in the morning and I'm laying in bed or am in my room all day. You'd think that being more active would be better. I've tried to mix that up, and lay in bed a little longer. I'm just not a very good hitter at Turner Field so far. Maybe the second half will be better.

CT How do you explain your ranking third in the National League in triples - trailing only speedsters Jimmy Rollins and Jose Reyes - despite not being a speedster yourself?

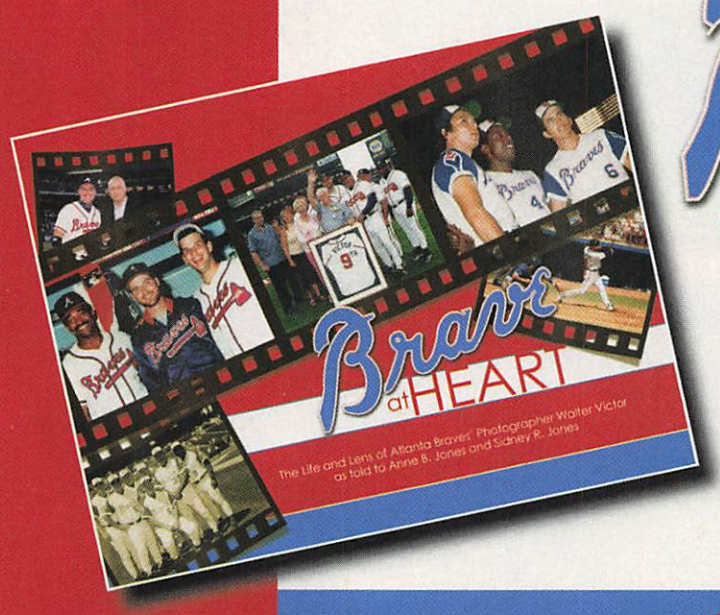
JOHNSON It's just putting [the ball] in the right spot. I hit a lot of my extra-base hits down the line. If you get a rightfielder playing you a little too far, you get a lucky carom, then you can take an extra base. I look for the triples. That's a really great way to get something going, get an easy run. It takes a lot of pressure off the guys getting you over to third and then getting you in. They can just get you in. So I'm always looking for the opportunity to go to third if I have it.

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

Johnson had a home run, triple and double to fall a single shy of hitting for the cycle May 19 at Boston (second game).

CT Throughout your career, you've showed tremendous resilience. Where does that mental toughness come from?

JOHNSON One of the best pieces of advice I ever received was from my brother, who said, "There's always the guys that have the most talent. Then there are the guys that have the most talent and work the hardest." I feel like we're all very good up here. It's just a matter of working hard and putting in the time, and things will work out. If I'm not going well, I know that I'm going to be on top of getting after my work and doing all the things I need to do and staying in a routine that is going to allow me to bounce back. It's worked so far. I've been pretty successful if I've dug myself into a hole. Now the idea is to just not ever get into a hole.



Brave at HEART

Walter Victor's Photograph Album of the Atlanta Braves

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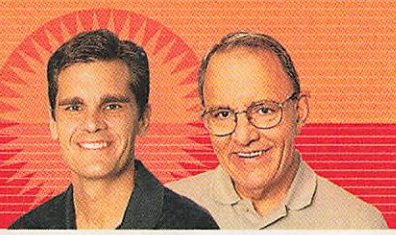


CARAY CORNER

GOOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO PERSEVERE

I LOVE THE UNDERDOG.

I especially enjoy watching guys fight through almost impossible odds to either get to the big leagues, or more impressively, to get back to the majors.

Consider then, the story of Earl "Buddy" Carlyle.

If anybody personifies Johnny Cash's "I've Been Everywhere" song, it's this guy.

He was a second-round draft choice by the Reds 11 years ago. At age 19, he had a 16-9 record in his first two professional seasons.

Then, he was traded to the Padres, and after a 25-14 run through Double A and Triple A, he made his major league debut as a 21-year old on Aug. 29, 1999, against Milwaukee. And he impressed.

In fact, Buddy got a hit (fifth-inning single) in the game before he gave up a hit (with two outs in the sixth inning).

But he'd wait until Sept. 9 of that season for his first win, which came against Montreal. It would be unimaginably longer for his second victory.

His 1999 record was 1-3 with a 5.97 ERA in seven games, all starts. The Padres felt a little more minor league work was needed, and Carlyle went back to Las Vegas. After the 2000 season, his odyssey really began.

His contract was sold to the Hanshin Tigers of the Japanese Leagues.

After two years there, it was back to the States, and back to packing and unpacking...

Omaha, Wichita, Trenton, Columbus, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Albuquerque, back overseas to Korea, then back to America with Richmond - signing with the Braves as a minor league free agent last winter - and finally... to Atlanta.

For those of you keeping score, that's 11 cities, three countries, and seven different organizations.

But the dream never died.

Carlyle got a call from the Braves, who have always searched the waiver wire for quality arms, "just in case."

This year's "just in case" was Mike Hampton's injury. Carlyle got plenty of spring work, pitched well, and made an impression. So much so, that he got the call to Atlanta in late May against the Phillies.

It didn't go well. Four innings, five earned runs, and certainly, for Carlyle, another disappointing trip back to Triple A.

But he got another shot. And again, the fickle fortunes of baseball played a huge part.

June 5 vs. the Marlins. Carlyle dazzled. Seven innings. One hit. One run allowed. And at long last, that elusive second major league win. That it came more than seven years after his first was amazing, and cause for celebration, right?

Nope.

The Braves needed his roster spot. After the game of his life, 29-year-old Buddy Carlyle was headed back to Richmond.

But again, fate intervened. Buddy and his family were in the car, headed to Richmond, when his phone rang. They'd gotten as far as Durham and were told to turn around. He did, and he's helped turn the Braves around.

As the back end of the Braves rotation floundered, Carlyle has been steady. His 3-2 record as of this writing may not dazzle, but the fact that the Braves have won five of his last seven starts - including a gutsy, eight-inning effort to bail out a weary bullpen July 6 in San Diego - says volumes about how far he has come, and how far he may help the Braves go.

He told me that after that first win so long ago, that at 21, you tend to take things for granted.

"You're in the big leagues, you've had some success, and you think it's never going to end," he recalled.

But after all those miles, all those towns, all those disappointments, and all the sacrifices his family has made on his behalf, his 2007 season has given this most unlikely of success stories a great deal of perspective.

No matter what happens from here on out, Buddy said, "I'll cherish my second win 10,000 times more than my first."

I love baseball for many reasons, and stories like Buddy's are one reason why. As a 19-year old pro, he had the world by the tail. His dream stalled, but he never did.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Skip Caray and Chip Caray alternate months in this space, so watch for Skip in September. Chip will be back here in October.

KYB KNOW YOUR BRAVES

KYLE DAVIES #26

2006 STATISTICS

W-L	ERA	G	GS	IP	H	R	ER	HR	BB	SO
3-7	8.38	14	14	63.1	90	60	59	14	33	51

BASICS

FULL NAME	HIRAM KYLE DAVIES
POSITION	Starting Pitcher
VITALS	Bats/Throws Right/Right
	Height 6-2
	Weight 205
	Age 23
BORN	September 9, 1983
	Decatur, Ga.
CONTRACT	Signed through 2007
ACQUIRED	Selected by the Braves in fourth round of 2001 draft.
PERSONAL	Single

CAREER

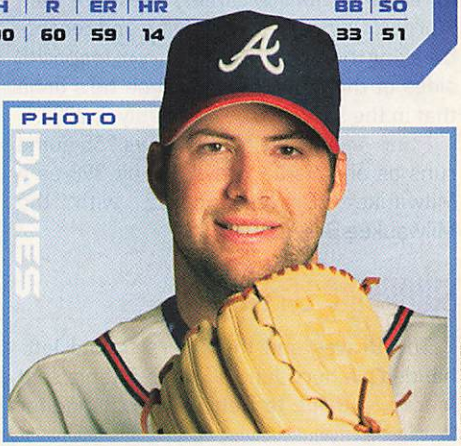
SERIOUS SLUGGER
Hit second career home run May 22 vs. Mets, his second in a span of just 12 starts.

METS TAMER
Two longest outings of career, both wins, were complete game vs. Mets last April 18 (7-1) and eight innings vs. Mets this May 22 (8-1).

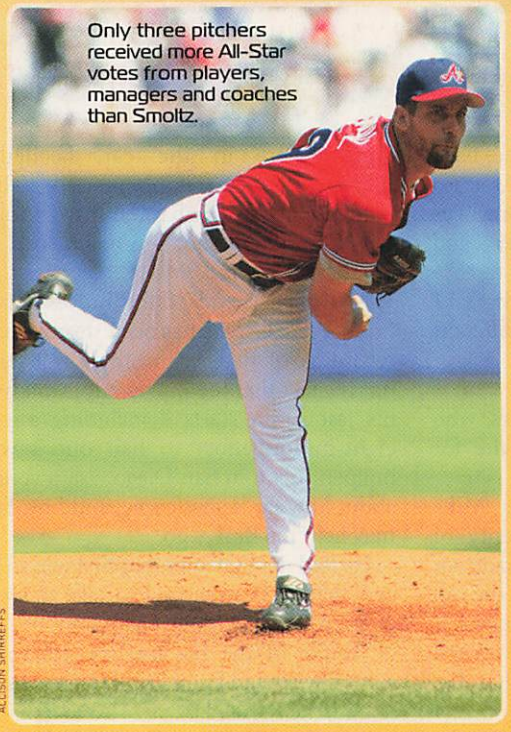
FIRST IMPRESSION
Beat Red Sox at Fenway Park, 7-5, on May 21 to become first Braves ptcher to win major league debut as starter since David Nied in 1992.

OUCH FACTOR
On disabled list last May 16 - Sept. 1 with strained right groin that required surgery.

PHOTO



ALLISON SHIRREFFS


Only three pitchers received more All-Star votes from players, managers and coaches than Smoltz.

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

SMOLTZ SIDETRACKED

JOHN SMOLTZ WAS NAMED to the National League All-Star team for the eighth time in his career, but he was unable to play, and chose not to attend, due to continued soreness in his right shoulder. The Braves placed the 40-year-old righthander on the disabled list July 6 (retroactive to July 3), and he returned to Atlanta from the West Coast road trip for examination.

An MRI was performed. No structural damage was found in the shoulder, only inflammation. The Braves and Smoltz said they expected him to be able to start July 18 against Cincinnati at Turner Field.

This is the first time Smoltz has been on the disabled list since late in the 2003 season when he had tendinitis in his elbow and was still working out of the bullpen.

Bobby Cox went so far as to say that Smoltz was placed on the DL this time because the Braves needed bullpen reinforcement, and not because his shoulder dictated the move.

Smoltz first felt discomfort in the shoulder when warming up May 29 in Milwaukee. At the time, he was 7-2 with a 2.82 ERA. When he was disabled, his record was 9-5 with a 3.07 ERA.

Smoltz was selected as a member of the All-Star team by vote of players, managers and coaches, as was **Brian McCann** (see pages 36-37), who was the only Brave at the July 10 game in San Francisco. The only NL pitchers to receive more votes than Smoltz were **Jake Peavy** (Padres), **Brad Penny** (Dodgers) and **Cole Hamels** (Phillies).

RECORD BOOK

John Smoltz broke the Atlanta record for strikeouts on June 22 against Detroit's **Magglio Ordonez**, his 2,856th victim, one more than **Phil Niekro**. The all-time franchise record of 2,912 is held by Niekro, but Smoltz should pass that this year if he's healthy.

Chipper Jones passed **Dale Murphy**'s Atlanta home run record on July 5 when he hit two against the Dodgers in Los Angeles to reach 372 for his career, one more than Murphy. Chipper's record-tying and record-breaking home runs came from opposite sides of the plate, the first time he's done that in the same game since July 5, 2000.

Hank Aaron only hit 335 of his 755 home runs as an Atlanta Brave. He hit 398 as a Milwaukee Brave and 22 with the Milwaukee Brewers.

SWAPPING LEFTIES

The Braves and the Tigers traded left-handed pitchers June 20 when Atlanta sent **Macay McBride** to Detroit in exchange for **Wil Ledezma**.

At the time of the deal, Ledezma, 26, was 3-1 with a 4.79 ERA. McBride, 24, was 1-0 with a 3.60 ERA. Ledezma, originally signed by Boston in 1998, was a Rule 5 draft pick by Detroit in 2002, and he was the Tigers' Minor League Pitcher of the Year in 2004 when he was 10-3 with a 2.42 ERA at Erie.

He's made 33 career big league starts, and last year was 3-3 with a 3.58 ERA for the American League champion Tigers. He appeared in two games in the ALCS against Oakland and was the winning pitcher in decisive Game 4. He worked in two World Series games against St. Louis and didn't allow a run in 1 1/3 innings.

McBride was the Braves' first-round draft pick in 2001 (24th overall). His career record was 6-1 with a 3.99 ERA in 112 games.

THE OL' HEAVE-HO

When **Bobby Cox** was ejected June 23 for arguing a called third strike on **Brian McCann**, it was the 131st ejection on his career, setting a major league record. Umpire **Chad Fairchild** did the honors. Cox previously was tied with Hall of Fame manager **John McGraw**. However, 14 of McGraw's ejections came as a player, so Cox already was the leader among managers.

ON THE MOVE

Lefthander **Jo-Jo Reyes** was purchased from Richmond to make his major league debut July 7 at San Diego, starting in place of **John Smoltz**, who went on the disabled list the previous day. Pitching before family and friends from nearby Riverside, Calif., Reyes lasted just three innings. Though he was charged with five runs, he was not involved in the decision, an 8-5 loss. He was expected to get at least one more start after the All-Star break.

Due to having an overworked bullpen, **Bobby Cox** decided to option **Pete Orr** to Richmond July 5 so that **Joey Devine** could be brought up from Mississippi. Devine also was called up briefly June 20 until **Wil Ledezma**, acquired in a trade for **Macay McBride**, reported June 23.

Lance Cormier was activated from the disabled list June 30 and optioned to Richmond.

STRONG RECOVERY

Though **Chipper Jones** missed 23 games in the first half due to injuries, by the time play resumed after the All-Star break, he had accumulated enough at-bats to be ranked among the league leaders in several key hitting categories.

Entering play on July 13, Chipper was sixth in the NL batting race with a .329 average. He was second in slugging percentage (.594), third in on-base percentage (.417), and second in OPS (1.011 on-base plus slugging).

Chipper reached a major milestone June 17 with a first-inning single that was the 2,000th hit of his career. He has the most hits in Atlanta Braves history, but is well behind the franchise leader (**Hank Aaron** 3,600).

SHORT HOPS

- The Braves suffered four shutouts in a span of five games June 19-24 against Boston and Detroit. The only run Atlanta scored in that period (46 innings) came on a solo home run by **Chipper Jones** June 23. The team batted .150 (23-for-153) in those games and dropped to .500 (38-38) for the season.
- On June 22, the Braves had 22 hits in beating Washington, 13-0. It was their highest hit total since April 18, 1999 (24 vs. Colorado).
- The Braves were 4-10 (.286) in interleague play.
- The Braves were 13-15 in June, their third straight losing record in June. Last year, they were an atrocious 6-21. They've had losing records in four of the last eight Junes.
- **Brian McCann** sprained his right knee July 3 against the Dodgers. He had an MRI on July 6, and there was no structural damage found. He played July 7 and started July 8.
- The Braves started play after the All-Star break with righthander **Jose Ascanio** in the bullpen in place of **Wil Ledezma**. The newly acquired lefty was stuck in his native Venezuela because his visa was lost in the laundry.

JOHN
SCHUERHOLZ
GENERAL MANAGER

CARLYLE, MOYLAN, YATES HAVE REALLY STEPPED UP

IT'S A TOUGH THING WHEN YOU TRADE one of your homegrown guys like Macay McBride. He had some good times and some struggling, but he never got in the groove and found a niche in the bullpen. We thought he could, but he never got to the point where Bobby was able to have confidence in his reliability.

We felt a change of scenery would do him well, and we got a guy we like a lot in Wil Ledezma. He's powerfully built, and we think ultimately he has a chance to be a pretty good starter.

It wasn't so much trading one left-handed bullpen arm for another left-handed bullpen arm. Both are that, but we believe Ledezma has some opportunity to develop into a starter down the road. It will be a challenge, because he has no options left, so he can't go to the minors. But winter ball will provide that opportunity, and that's likely in the cards.

Tanyon Sturtze is coming along well on a rehab assignment. After all the hard work and dedicated efforts by him and our trainers and rehab people, he's coming out of it with a healthy shoulder and a positive attitude and the determination to pitch. His velocity has improved, and his split-finger is near his quality major league level, so it's very encouraging.

We hoped to have him by the end of May, but now it looks like it probably will be sometime in August. Anytime you can get an arm like that and the quality he's displayed, it's a very welcome addition, assuming he can get back. And we think he can.

Buddy Carlyle has done a remarkable job. He had a couple of rough starts, but he has great perseverance and a journeyman's toughness. He's been all around the globe in his career, and he's kept his nose to the grindstone and made it back to the big leagues. Bobby really feels confident that we have a chance to win when he's out there, and we're happy with the job he's done.

> "IT'S HARD TO SAY WHY WE HIT SO MUCH BETTER ON THE ROAD THAN AT HOME DURING THE FIRST HALF."

Someone else who's doing a remarkable job is Peter Moylan. He pitched well in spring training but didn't make the team. He went to Triple A and pitched well, and got back up here. He has that crazy sidearm delivery and good stuff - a lively fastball and an effective breaking ball.

When you lose a guy like Mike Gonzalez, you need guys like Moylan and Tyler Yates to step up - and they have.

As I've said all along, this division race is continuing to be a dogfight. The clubs are evenly matched, and I don't think anyone will run away with it. We have to play hard until the last week to see who wins.

Chipper continues to show what a remarkable talent he is and how much better we play as a team when he's in the lineup. He takes on the burden of run production, not always single-handedly, but single-handedly if he has to. He doesn't shy away from it. He seems to flourish when the team needs him the most, and he's been doing that since his rookie year.

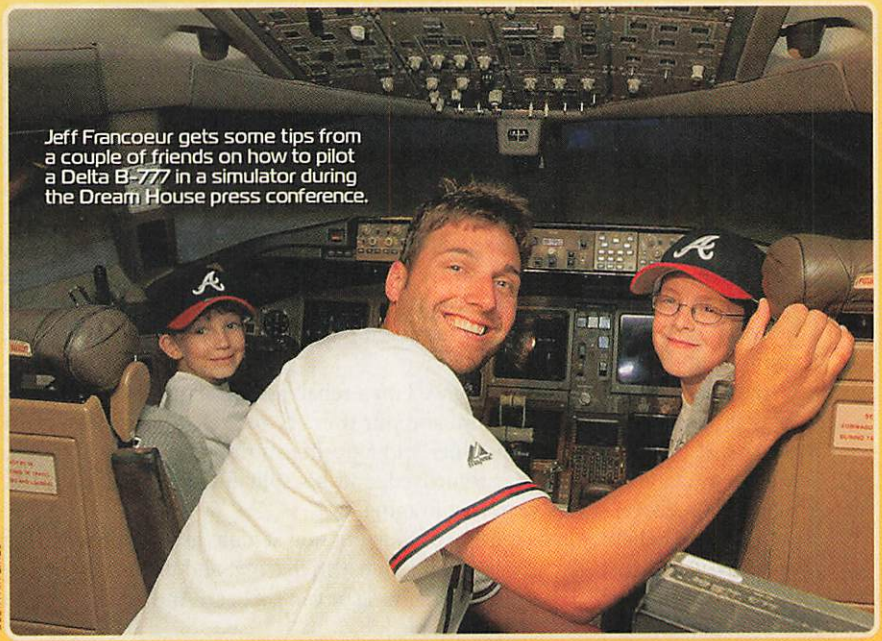
It's hard to say why we hit so much better on the road than at home during the first half. It's probably coincidental. Things like that go in cycles.

But all of our lives are busier now - yours, mine, the players'. There's more information coming at us, and we're connected to more people around the world.

When the players are home, they have those issues like the rest of us. On the road, their issues focus mainly on their jobs on the field - getting their rest, getting to the park, doing their work, and performing in the games.

At home, they have other obligations - friends, relatives - that demand time management. I don't know if that's what it is or not.

FRANCOEUR'S FRIENDS



Jeff Francoeur gets some tips from a couple of friends on how to pilot a Delta B-777 in a simulator during the Dream House press conference.

DELTA AIR LINES

DELTA AIR LINES and **Jeff Francoeur** are teaming to go to bat for Atlanta's Dream House for Medically Fragile Children via a new charitable sponsorship called the SkyMiles Home Run Program. The official airline of the Atlanta Braves pledged to donate 25,000 Delta SkyMiles to benefit this charity for each home run hit by Francoeur during the 2007 season.

The charitable organization is based in the Atlanta suburb of Lilburn, where Francoeur grew up, and its original location was only a block from his home. The organization helps medically fragile children live at home through programs that teach and support families to care for such children.

Laura Moore, founder and CEO of Dream House, said the SkyMiles will be used, among other ways, to help many medically fragile children fly to other cities for organ transplant checkups or testing.

DAMN YANKEES!

The Braves are the most-popular team in the National League, according to Harris Interactive's online poll. Only the Yankees are more popular in the majors among adults in the U.S. who follow baseball, according to Harris.

The last time the Braves were ranked No. 1 by Harris was 1999. However, they've never finished lower than third since then. They were third last year behind the Yankees and Mets. But the Mets tumbled all the way to seventh this year. This is the fifth straight year the Yankees have been No. 1.

SEE JEFF SWIM?

Jeff Francoeur, through his association with The Tumornators, will make an appearance Aug. 18 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Dynamo Swim Club in the Atlanta suburb of Chamblee to help raise funds to benefit the Children's Tumor Foundation. He may be joined by a Braves teammate or two, but details were not confirmed at press time.

The event is open to the public, and is being billed as a "meet and greet" with Francoeur. There will be autographed photos and door prizes for a one-time family contribution of $125 that will cover four tickets for that night's Braves game against Arizona. For information, contact Greg@Tumornators.com or visit dynamoswimclub.com.

The goal is to take 2,000 fans to the game and to raise at least $25,000 to be donated to the Children's Tumor Foundation (CTF) via The Tumornators, the name **Chad** and **Drew Leathers** created for their fundraising efforts that Francoeur supports. Chad is a childhood friend of Francoeur's, and Drew, his youngest brother, has Schwannomatosis, an incurable disease characterized by large and debilitating tumors. The Leathers family is expected to appear at the event.

TEE PARTY

The second annual Atlanta Braves Foundation Golf Classic took place June 21 at East Lake Golf Club and raised $150,000 to support the Foundation's youth outreach efforts and numerous charitable causes throughout the metro Atlanta community.

Celebrity participants included **Jeff Francoeur**, **Kyle Davies**, **Tyler Yates**, **Jarrod Saltalamacchia**, team president **Terry McGuirk**, **John Schuerholz**, **Roger McDowell**, **Glenn Hubbard**, **Brian Snitker**, **Chino Cadahia**, **Mark Lemke**, **Charlie Leibrandt**, **Pete Smith**, **Marty Perez**, **Brad Clontz**, **Zane Smith**, **Jay Howell**, **Jeff Treadway**, and **Joe Simpson**.

BALLPARK FEAST

The Braves are selling two all-you-can-eat seat packages that include the price of admission to a game and all the food fans can eat.

The first package, available for $25, is an Upper Reserved ticket along the first base side, giving fans access to the All-Star Express concession stand. Menu items featured for this package are: hot dogs, nachos, peanuts, popcorn and soft drinks.

A Lexus Pavilion package, available for $60, features food from the popular

Skip and Pete's BBQ stand with a wide variety of menu choices: BBQ pulled pork sandwiches, BBQ hot wings, hot dogs, cole slaw, potato salad, corn bread, peanuts, popcorn, soft drinks, Budweiser and Bud Light.

Tickets can be purchased in advance at braves.com/tickets, by calling Ticketmaster at 1-800-326-4000, or by visiting any Ticketmaster outlet or the Turner Field ticket office. Groups of 25 or more can purchase tickets by calling (404) 577-9100 and receive recognition on the Tomahawk LED board during the game.

BLOW HARD

No one is saying **Chad Paronto** is full of hot air... but he did beat the other Braves who competed with him in the Rally Foundation's bubble gum blowing contest June 23 at Turner Field. Paronto, **Brian McCann**, **Peter Moylan** and **Jarrod Saltalamacchia** (below) competed against three Rally Kids (cancer patients or survivors), as well as five students who won the Money in the Mitt Contest for the opportunity to be in the event. A student, **Rex Rodgers**, won the contest, beating Paronto by an inch. Rally's signature bubble gum blowing competition raises awareness and funding for needed childhood cancer research.

ATLANTA BRAVES

BALLS & STRIKES

- Recent events at Turner Field included: Firefighters' Appreciation Night on July 13 with fire trucks on display on Ralph David Abernathy Blvd. in front of Turner Field. Christmas in July on July 14, complete with snow, Christmas trees and Santa. Stitch N' Pitch on July 15 with hundreds of fans sitting together in the stands to knit, crochet, cross-stitch, needlepoint and embroider while cheering for the Braves.

BOBBY COX

MANAGER

OUR PITCHING WILL BE BETTER IN SECOND HALF

IT DOESN'T SURPRISE ME that the National League East is as close as it is. I think everybody felt it would be pretty tight all year long. There was some thought that some team, probably the Mets, could run away with it and hide, but I honestly think most of the teams are pretty evenly matched.

You aren't going to win unless you have good pitching. That's always been my theory, and all the teams, including ours, have had their share of (pitching) injuries. I think Roger McDowell has done a super job to get us this far with the pitching. I think it will get even better in the second half.

I don't know what kind of record it's going to take to win the division - wins and losses. Who knows? The Cardinals won a World Series with 83 wins last year. That never happens, and it's sure going to take more than that this year.

We feel good about the team, and feel we're going to be right there, in the thick of things as the season is winding down.

I'm hopeful about the state of our pitching staff and feel like I have every reason to be hopeful. John Smoltz is doing well. Both Tim Hudson and Chuck James are feeling good, and Kyle Davies is very close to being really consistent. Best of all, Buddy Carlyle is doing a great job for us. He's been a welcome surprise - let's put it that way. He's been good.

In order to win games, pitchers need to go deeper in them. Our bullpen is fine. It's been great. We want our starters to go six innings or so. If they can do that, I'll be happy!

In terms of some of our roster moves in the first half of the season, we think left-handed pitcher Wil Ledezma's future lies in a starting role. Maybe next season. For now, he's in the bullpen. He's not trained to start right now. He's a guy who can throw more than one inning (now), three maybe, two for sure.

> "I EXPECT THIS TEAM TO STAY IN THE CHASE UNTIL THE VERY END AND WIN. I BELIEVE OUR PLAYERS SHARE MY EXPECTATION..."

We had to have another pitcher during that long West coast trip to San Diego and Los Angeles. We were depleted. We needed to carry 13 pitchers and have four guys on the bench, so it was necessary to send down Pete Orr. It was something I hated to do, because I love Pete.

It's no fun, I'll tell you. I hated that day. It felt like spring training on the final cut. It's always the toughest. I've been managing for a long time, and that's one job that never gets any easier.

We were really encouraged right before the break that Andruw Jones had started hitting. He looked so much better, and that's a big plus.

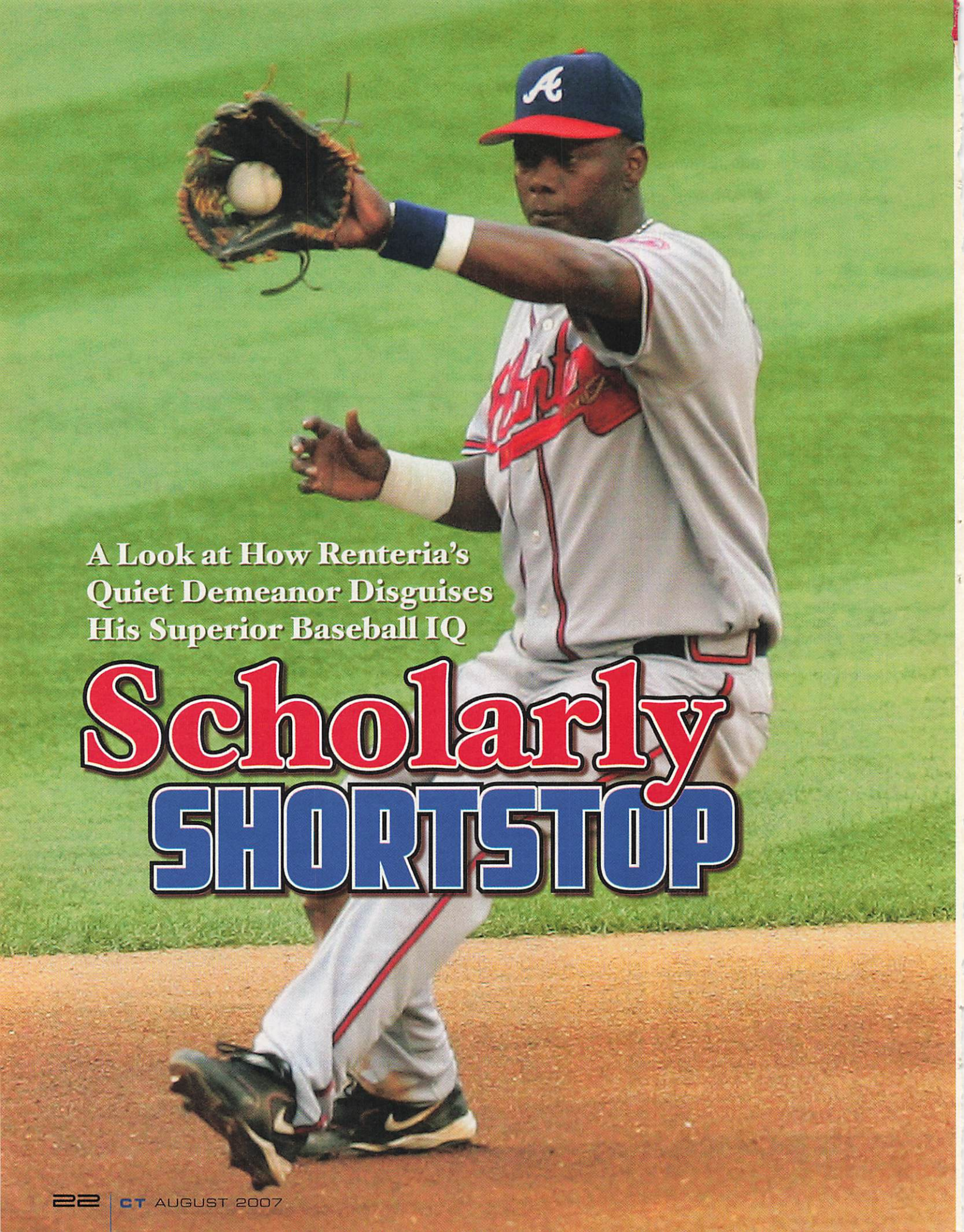
Even though Chipper Jones has spent time on the disabled list, we always feel like we can count on him when he comes back. His innate talent allows him to have an injury, rest and recuperate, and come back as if he hasn't missed a beat. He's got a lot of baseball talent to where he can miss 15 to 20 days, not swing a bat, then walk up and go 3-for-4.

Smoltz is the same way. He can step right in and look as if he hasn't missed any time.

This isn't something that's learned. All guys are different. There are plenty of guys who can play on the major league level and have a good or even great career, but that doesn't mean they were born with the talent that got them there. They had a desire to play and worked really hard to get there and especially to stay there.

The amount of work a major leaguer puts into preparing to play isn't talked about enough. Players today work year round to stay in shape and to get better.

I expect this team to stay in the chase until the very end and win. I believe our players share my expectation of winning. We have a lot of young guys on our team, but they like to play - and they like to win.



A Look at How Renteria's Quiet Demeanor Disguises His Superior Baseball IQ

Scholarly SHORTSTOP

BY JAY BUSBEE

IN THE MID-'90s, Terry Pendleton was in the autumn of his playing career, holding down third base for the Florida Marlins. Over two seasons, he watched a procession of raw rookies pass through the turnstiles of a franchise barely four years old. Most didn't leave much of an impression.

But in 1996, one youngster in particular - a 19-year-old shortstop from Colombia, who then was the youngest player in the majors - caught Pendleton's eye.

"A young kid with a lot of talent who wanted to learn the game, wanted to be a better player," Pendleton recalled of his erstwhile infield mate. "He was real quiet. You had to make him talk. But you could see him watching, taking everything in."

And now it's all coming back out.

The next year, 1997, that kid burned his name - Edgar Renteria - into baseball's history books when he hit a World Series-winning single in Game 7 against the Indians. Nine years later, Pendleton and Renteria reunited in Atlanta, Pendleton as coach, Renteria as a five-time All-Star.

In that decade-plus in the majors, Renteria developed a surgeon's focus, a sculptor's attention to detail, a Hall of Fame manager's breadth of baseball knowledge in becoming one of the smartest players in the game. His teammates have noticed, even if the rest of the baseball world hasn't.

"He's the leader of the pack," Tim Hudson said. "Offensively, defensively, in the clubhouse, he's been doing a great job for us all year."

The quiet kid from Colombia - a near baseball wilderness when he was growing up - has become the linchpin of a team that's suddenly found itself in dire need of a savior. The Braves could be in worse hands.

In the Colombia of Renteria's youth, baseball placed a distant second to soccer as the national pastime, and kids played the game with cardboard gloves. Edgar's brother Edinson, eight years Edgar's senior, drew on his experience as a longtime prospect in the Houston and Florida organizations to teach Edgar the game, from the basics to the nuances.

Edgar also devoured TV Games of the Week beamed in from the United States, taking a particular interest in Cardinals Hall of Fame shortstop Ozzie Smith.

"He was always in the right place," Renteria said of his idol. "He always did the right thing with the ball."

Smith's lessons-from-afar weren't lost on Renteria, who's played for, and impressed, many of the finest managers in the game today, including Jim Leyland, Tony La Russa and Bobby Cox. Each recognized Renteria's rare combination of intelligence and skill, La Russa going so far as to dub Renteria his unofficial team captain during Renteria's time as a Cardinal (1999-2004).

After his successful stints in Florida (1996-98) and St. Louis and a brief run-in with the psychopathic Red Sox faithful in 2005, Renteria arrived in Atlanta in 2006. The Braves knew they had gotten a good deal in snaring the Fenway-shellshocked Renteria for prospect Andy Marte, but it wasn't until Renteria returned to his old good-bat-and-glove, better-brain style that the Braves realized what a prize they'd snagged.

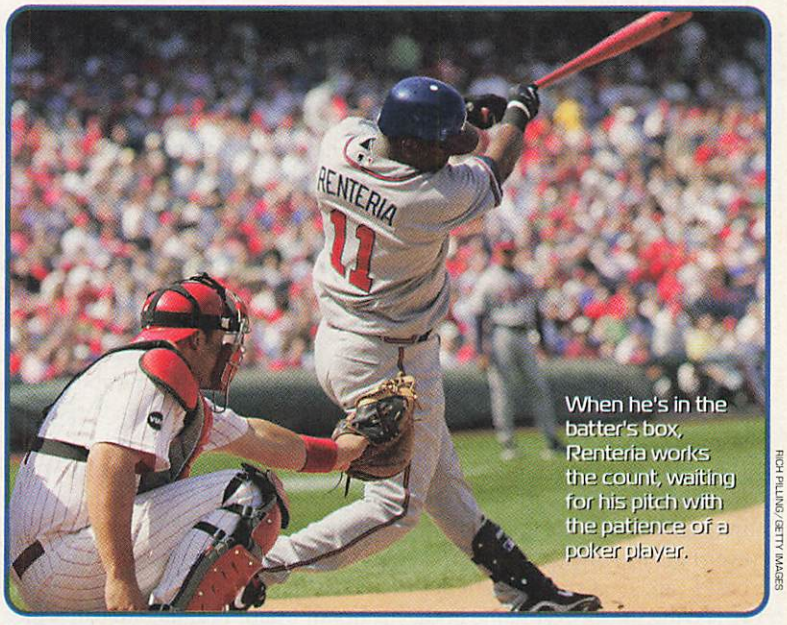
"You can't always tell when a player has or hasn't peaked," Pendleton said. "Edgar had a bad time with Boston, and he caught a lot of grief from the fans. But when he got here, he went right back to being the kind of player we always thought he would be."

Which is to say, seeing the game unfold about five seconds before everyone else.

Every game, Renteria, who turns 32 this month, puts on a clinic at shortstop. He'll move more than 50 feet in setting up between batters, even during at-bats. He can tell almost before the ball leaves the bat whether it'll be a worm-burner, a seeing-eye shot, or a top-spinning skipper. He ranges halfway to Alpharetta to track down balls, nailing stunned runners at first by a full step.

"I don't know how many balls I've had hit in the hole or right up the middle and I think, 'base hit,' then I turn around and Edgar's there," said Kyle Davies. "Even some that he gets to, I think, 'There's no way he's getting the guy [at first], just hold onto it.' But then he slings it across the diamond, and [the runner's] out."

"I like to play every pitch like they're going to hit it to me," Renteria said. "That's the way I get prepared. When you're not ready, that's when they hit the ball to you."



When he's in the batter's box, Renteria works the count, waiting for his pitch with the patience of a poker player.

RICH PILLING/GETTY IMAGES

At the plate, Renteria puts in equal preparation.

"I study video [on pitchers] all the time, at home and before the game," Renteria said. "When I take [batting practice], I ask the coaches to throw what the pitcher's going to throw. When I'm hitting second or third, I try to see every pitch they throw to the batters in front of me."

Once he's in the batter's box, he'll work the count like a poker player, folding hand after hand, waiting for an ideal draw, fouling off pitches until he gets exactly what he's looking for. The patience has paid. Renteria's stats are the epitome of the intelligent hitter:

- His .358 road batting average ranks second in the National League.
- He's already put together an 18-game hitting streak this year, a followup to a 23-game streak of last year.
- He's hitting .450 with a man on third and less than two outs,

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ATLANTA BRAVES

BATTER UP!

IT'S AN HONOR TO HAVE THE LONGEST NAME EVER

IT'S BEEN A COOL first couple of months. I pinch myself every day to make sure I'm not dreaming. It still amazes me.

The toughest part of adjusting to the majors from Double-A is that it's a whole new atmosphere. You have to adjust to everything. It's a big jump from Double A, but it got me ready. I think that Double-A definitely helped me. It's still a game. That's how you have to think of it. It's a baseball game. Play it the same every day. I think that's how my personality has been since I was a kid. I was always taught to play that way, taught to be that kind of person. So, I don't think it's that big of a transition.

Everyone up here, everyone who is in the big leagues... the reason they're here is because they're not going to cry about one at-bat. They've got a whole game to think about, plus 161 other games. So one at-bat is nothing, or one play is nothing.

Brian [McCann] and [Jeff] Francoeur also made the jump from Double A. They're good ballplayers, and they're going to have success at whatever level they go to. I can just hope the same for myself.

We've got a lot of veteran guys here and guys that I've played with before who have helped me. So it's been cool. They've helped me here and there with little things, with baseball stuff. If you need help around the clubhouse or on the field with what to do, they'll help you.

> "I'VE GOTTEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY FIRST BASE, AND I'M OPEN TO ANYTHING. I WANT TO PLAY."

A lot of the guys that I've played with - Brian [McCann], [Jeff] Francoeur, [Matt] Diaz - all those guys, are who I like to talk to. I'm not afraid to ask anybody anything. The veteran guys, I know they're more than willing to talk to me about anything, but I try not to invade their space. So, it's been a pretty good mixture of everybody.

You have to have confidence to play this game. I've gotten an opportunity to play first base, and I'm open to anything. I want to play. So anything to get me in the lineup, I'll do. I think I've been doing what my role is, just playing whenever I get a chance. Every chance I get to be in the lineup, I'm trying to do the best I can. That's all you can do.

Having the longest name in the history of Major League Baseball is great. It's not really an accomplishment, because I was born with the name, but it's still a great honor to have.

My most memorable "first" was the first win (a 4-3 victory May 2 vs. Philadelphia at Turner Field). As a catcher, you take pride in being able to handle your pitching, so getting that first win, helping my pitcher get the first win, I think that was the biggest thing.

There's not too much difference in calling games in the major leagues, but it is a little easier because these guys have command of all their pitches, where in Double A some guys are still trying to get command of everything. So you know in any count you can throw any pitch up here. I think, in that sense, it's a little easier.

As far as hitting well at Turner Field, it's one of those things that you just kind of lock in. You keep playing and keep swinging. It's tough to be a switch-hitter. I think that I've done pretty well. Obviously, Chipper has, too. Just a work ethic is what gets it.

Interleague play was crazy. You're playing American League teams that have great pitching. They're not afraid to go after us, because they don't have to hit. They're going to be a little more powerful. They're not afraid to go in on you. So they're pitching a whole lot different than National League pitchers.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

and .400 with the bases loaded.

Renteria comes up big when the game grows short. He's hitting .370 after the sixth inning, and an amazing .455 in so-called "late-inning pressure situations" (trailing by three or fewer runs) with runners on base.

When swinging at the first pitch, Renteria hits at a .410 clip. And he's not much easier of an out later in the at-bat. He's hitting .375 when the count's 3-1, and .360 when the count's full.

"Sometimes you're ready on the first pitch, and sometimes you have to go the distance," Renteria said. "You need to know what the pitcher throws, what he can throw."

Off the field, he doesn't say much more now than he did when he was a teenager, but he doesn't need to.

"He works," Pendleton said simply. "That's great not only for himself, but for the young kids [on the team]. He's here early, taking groundballs, doing everything sound fundamentally, every single day. The kids look at that and say, 'You know what? We've got to get going. We can't let this old guy do this to us.'"

Renteria's also smart enough to know he can't play forever, and is already making plans to cement his legacy in his homeland. He and Edinson own a Colombian development league with clubs in four cities.

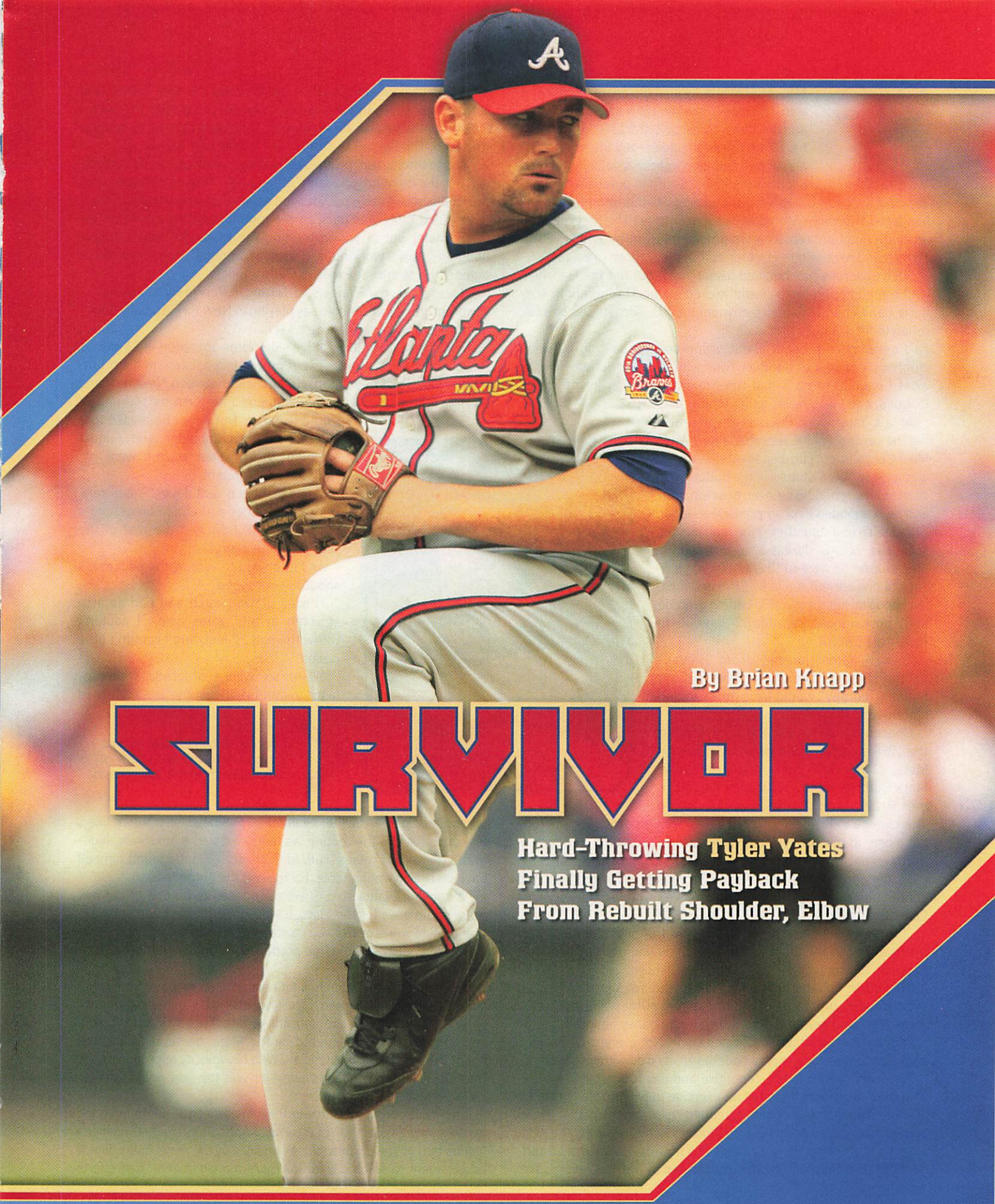
Major League Baseball pulled its operations out of Colombia in the mid-1980s, apparently fearful of the drug culture that had resulted in the kidnappings of foreigners connected to high-profile organizations. But in recent years, MLB scouts have returned to Colombia, and the Renterias are strengthening the league from the ground up to feed a steady stream of prospects northward.

"Baseball's big in Colombia," he said. "It's not soccer, but there are some good kids. I want to see them [succeed in baseball] like I did."

Renteria's quiet effectiveness wins games and clubhouse praise, but it also keeps him from true marquee status.

He doesn't do his job with extra flash and dazzle. He doesn't give outrageous quotes to the press. But even the fact that he gets passed over for honors - like this year's inexplicable exclusion from the NL All-Star team - doesn't seem to faze Renteria. He knows that SportsCenter highlights do not a career make.

"His desire, his work ethic, and his smarts got him here, and they're what's going to keep him here," Pendleton said. "He's done all the right things so far. I don't see him stopping anytime soon."



By Brian Knapp

SURVIVOR

Hard-Throwing Tyler Yates Finally Getting Payback From Rebuilt Shoulder, Elbow

RICH PILLING/GETTY IMAGES

THE MARKS Tyler Yates bears on his right arm – a six-inch scar on the inside of his elbow and the four arthroscopic scars hidden beneath his sleeve on his shoulder – tell the story of trials and tribulation, perseverance, and one pitcher's insatiable desire to pursue a dream.

Yates, just turning 30 this month, already has faced two career-threatening arm injuries. The first required an elbow ligament replacement procedure (Tommy John) in 2002. The second necessitated rotator cuff surgery three years later.

Such adversity has buckled lesser men, but not the Hawaiian with the blistering fastball and wicked slider. Through both surgeries and countless hours of monotonous, sometimes painful, rehabilitation, Yates carried on.

"I never once thought about giving up," he said, in between clubhouse games of Connect Four with Chipper Jones. "This is what I wanted to do. I had the dream of playing in the major leagues, and I was never going to give it up."

At last, Yates - and the Braves - are receiving the rewards of his determination. When Mike Gonzalez succumbed to elbow surgery in mid-May, Yates' stature in the bullpen was elevated from middle reliever to setup man, and he responded in an impressive manner.

Yates strung together nine consecutive scoreless innings during a 16-day span in May. In June, he worked 10 2/3 innings, allowing just one earned run (0.84 ERA) and limiting opposing hitters to a .135 batting average. In 22 appearances from May 7-June 30, he posted a 1.59 ERA.

To call Yates' journey from Hawaii's northern-most island to the Atlanta bullpen "bumpy" would be a gross understatement.

Chosen by Oakland in the 23rd round of the 1998 amateur draft, he was dealt to the Mets, along with journeyman lefthander Mark Guthrie, in the 2001 trade that put former Brave David Justice in an A's uniform. The change of scenery spurred Yates, who emerged as a potential closer in the New York farm system in 2002.

"I was having one of my better years," he said.

Stationed with the Mets' Triple-A affiliate in Norfolk, Va., his career plans derailed when he uncorked a 100-mile-per-hour fastball pitching for the Tides in June 2002.

"I threw a pitch, and it hurt," Yates said. "It was the most pain I've ever felt in my life. I knew something wasn't right. When it happens to you, when it's your body, you know."

The ulnar collateral ligament in his elbow snapped like an overextended rubber band. He underwent surgery in New York a week later and feared for his future in the game he loved.

"It's Tommy John surgery," Yates said. "Not everybody makes it back. It did cross my mind. I wondered what I'd do without baseball."

Recovery proved a dull, repetitive and painful process. Range-of-motion workouts included an exercise in which Yates placed a 10-pound weight in his hand, extended his arm across a table and allowed the lower portion of the limb to hang free over the side. He repeated the action 60 seconds at a time over a span of 20 consecutive minutes, each exercise separated by a 30-second respite.

"I'd do the same things every day for three months," Yates said. "I tried to stay positive and did everything I could do to get back."

Six months into his rehabilitation, Yates was cleared to resume throwing. The light at the end of his tunnel had appeared.

"You go through all the physical therapy... to finally be able to play catch is the most exciting part," Yates said. "I wasn't nervous. They tell you to take it easy, but you kind of want to go out and let it go."

By 2004, Yates was back on the mound, earning a spot on the Mets' roster out of spring training. He made his major league debut in April, working six shutout innings in a no-decision against the Montreal Expos in Puerto Rico.

"It was awesome," Yates said. "Being in Puerto Rico took a lot of the pressure off me. People say playing in New York isn't any different than playing anywhere else... It is."

A reconstructed elbow at his side, Yates appeared in 21 games (seven starts) with the Mets but proved inconsistent in his return from injury. Rust had set in. He bounced between New York and Norfolk and appeared to be rounding into form as the end of summer neared. But when he awoke to a dull ache in his shoulder one August morning, the internal alarms went off. Not again, he thought.

"I had just been sent down," Yates said. "I told the trainer and ended up getting a cortisone shot. I pitched the rest of the year [with the injury]."

As fall bowed to winter, the pain in his shoulder worsened.

"I tried playing catch and had no arm strength at all," Yates said. "I couldn't throw the ball 90 feet, and I couldn't lift a pound."

When six weeks of physical therapy failed to improve the injury, Yates returned to team doctors for further evaluation. The news struck him like a line drive back to the mound, as tests revealed a moderate, high-grade tear of his rotator cuff. In February 2005, he found himself back on the operating table. He missed the entire season.

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

Opponents hit just .135 against Yates in June and were batting .200 against him for the season.

"It sucked," Yates said. "I was supposed to be one of the primary setup guys for the Mets. It was one of those huge setbacks that makes you feel like you're starting all over again."

Apprehension set in as he prepared for another lengthy rehabilitation.

"A shoulder (operation) is a lot harder to come back from (than elbow surgery)," Yates said. "The shoulder is completely different."

By the start of 2006 spring training, Yates was primed for a second comeback. Non-tendered by the Mets, he signed as a free agent with the Baltimore Orioles. With his velocity approaching the mid 90s, he figured holding down a job was the least of his worries. He was mistaken.

The Orioles assigned Yates to their minor league camp in spring training and released him at the end of April after a hamstring injury landed him on the disabled list. Blindsided by the news, Yates directed his agent to reach out to Baltimore management. Their efforts

went unanswered.

"I never thought that would happen, not that early in my career," Yates said. "I had gotten back most of my velocity. I had a hard time figuring out how they could release somebody who was throwing 93 to 95 miles an hour. We even asked the Orioles if there was room for me in Double-A."

Without a job and without any suitors on the horizon, Yates took fate into his own hands. His agent scheduled a throwing session in Kissimmee, Fla., and faxed an invitation to all 30 major league teams. Represented by former director of player development J.J. Picollo, the Braves were one of only two teams who showed interest.

"Halfway through the session, I saw [Picollo] on the phone already," Yates said. "I didn't know if it was a good sign or a bad sign. [The Braves] called me while I was driving home and said they wanted to work something out. It was nice to feel needed and wanted."

The 6-foot-4, 240-pounder agreed to a minor league deal with the Braves on May 3, 2006. He was pitching in the big leagues less than a month later in a 9-3 loss to the Dodgers May 30. Although Yates surrendered four hits and three earned runs over one and one-third innings, he had regained his professional foothold.

He appeared in 56 games last year and, despite issues with control, surfaced as one of the more dependable options out of the team's maligned bullpen (2-5, 3.96, one save).

"They say the last thing that comes back after surgery is command," Yates said. "I got to pitch a lot in the eighth inning. The experience I gained last year really helped me."

This season, the Braves continue to reap the rewards from the risk they took on a determined flamethrower out of the University of Hawaii-Hilo.

Through 37 games, Yates carried a 2-0 record with one save and a 3.06 earned run average and was posting right at a strikeout per inning.

"I got hot at the right time," he said. "[Manager] Bobby [Cox] likes to go with the hot pitcher. I guess I earned it."

A fighting spirit comes naturally for Yates, whose mother was diagnosed with breast cancer his junior year of high school.

"It was hard," Yates said. "To see her go through chemotherapy, to see her lose her hair ... it was really hard. She's a cancer survivor. I think I get a lot of my perseverance from her."

METS NEED D-TRAIN, BUT IS HE AVAILABLE?

THE METS CLEARLY are getting restless, as evidenced by their firing of hitting coach **Rick Down** and release of **Julio Franco**. Their biggest issue, however, is still pitching. The Mets need another starter and an eighth-inning reliever. They can't count on righthanders **Pedro Martinez** and **Duaner Sanchez** to return healthy and productive. Marlins lefthander **Dontrelle Willis** would be a perfect fit, but he's not pitching all that well, and the Marlins continue to tell clubs that he is not available.

With the Giants planning a greater emphasis on player development, it remains to be seen whether or not their future will include leftfielder **Barry Bonds**. The Giants can't bid farewell to Bonds easily, not when attendance might drop and thus make it difficult for ownership to pay down the debt at privately financed AT&T Park. But if the Giants signed, say, Yankees third baseman **Alex Rodriguez**, they no longer would need Bonds. The team does not plan to cut payroll.

The Cubs frequently are mentioned as a possibility for Rodriguez due to his relationship with manager **Lou Piniella**. However, the team's new owner probably will not be in place by the time free agency begins – and a prospective candidate awaiting approval would not risk angering his future partners by spending outrageously on A-Rod.

Likewise, the Cubs probably can't finalize their five-year contract with righthander **Carlos Zambrano** until their potential ownership choices are narrowed down to one or two groups. The problem is, Zambrano's price is rising now that he has re-emerged as one of the most dominant pitchers in baseball. The White Sox's awarding of a four-year, $56 million contract to lefthander **Mark Buehrle** means that Zambrano could be the top 30-and-under starting pitcher available on the free-agent market – by far.

Marlins president **David Samson** was out of line when he criticized the Mariners for awarding **Ichiro Suzuki** a five-year, $90 million contract. First off, it's none of Samson's business. Second, Ichiro is a special case. True, he turns 34 in October, but he keeps himself in excellent shape. What's more, the moment he loses his speed, he can begin using his power. Watch Ichiro take batting practice sometime. He probably could produce a 30-homer season, but prefers to hit for a high average.

The Dodgers' biggest need is a starting pitcher, followed by a middle-inning reliever. But the team has not ruled out adding a hitter, and could take a run at Rangers first baseman **Mark Teixeira**. The Dodgers probably would be better off with six years of **James Loney** instead of one-plus of Teixeira, but a deal might make more sense if it could be expanded to include the Rangers' setup man, **Akinori Otsuka**.

The Astros are willing to trade one of their late-inning relievers, but their price for closer **Brad Lidge** likely will be exorbitant. Righthander **Chad Qualls** would cost less, followed by righthander **Dan Wheeler**. The Red Sox have targeted Lidge in the past, and they've also liked Rockies lefty **Brian Fuentes**, who recently went on the disabled list with a strained side muscle.

- KEN ROSENTHAL IS A SENIOR WRITER FOR FOXSPORTS.COM

ALWAYS PREPARED

No Matter the Assignment, Versatile Villarreal Can Be Counted On To Deliver

BY STEVE FALL

BASEBALL HAS BECOME a game of specialization. Among pitchers, there are starters, closers, setup men, situational relievers, and long relievers. Then there is Oscar Villarreal. He can fill every role.

Villarreal may get the call to pitch in the second inning, the ninth, or at anytime in between. Bases empty or bases loaded. Whether for one inning or a longer stint, it doesn't matter for the 25-year-old righthander from Mexico. He makes sure he's prepared.

While many pitchers say they'll take the ball at any time, they usually prefer a defined role. Villarreal just wants to pitch.

"I like to pitch, and I like to win. I just want to contribute to my team that day," said Villarreal, who idolized Hall of Famer Nolan Ryan while growing up.

Even pitching coach Roger McDowell seemed surprised to learn that Villarreal has pitched in every inning except the first this season.

"He's able to do a lot of things," said McDowell. "Last year, he had some starts. He's basically a strike-thrower that comes in and keeps the opposition where they're at, or keeps the lead, and gives us an opportunity to win."

Since the beginning of the 2006 season, his first as a Brave, through July 1 of this season, Villarreal had worked 135 innings. No other Braves reliever pitched more than 100 innings in that time frame.

In fact, Villarreal is the only member of the Atlanta bullpen that remains there from Opening Day 2006. He's gone 10-1 with a 3.73 ERA as a Brave.

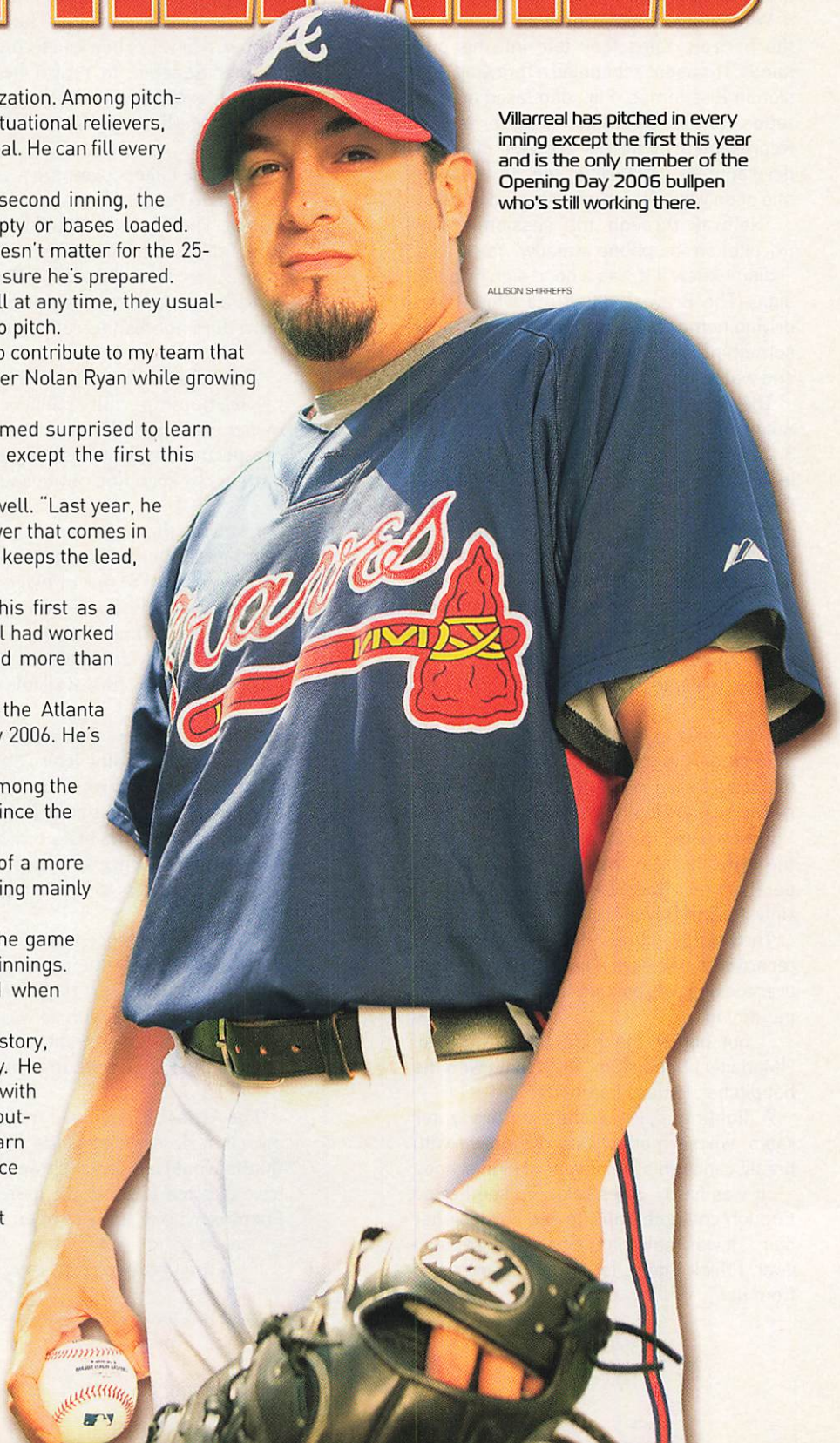
Only John Smoltz had a better ERA (3.34) among the team's pitchers with at least 100 innings since the start of 2006.

While those numbers might seem worthy of a more glamorous role, Villarreal doesn't mind working mainly as a long man.

"I want to pitch well. I want to come into the game and do my job. One inning, two innings, three innings. Who cares? I enjoy doing my job," he said when asked where he gets his motivation.

The seventh Mexican pitcher in Braves history, Villarreal made his presence felt right away. He recorded wins in his first two appearances with Atlanta last season, and in four of his first six outings. He became the first Braves pitcher to earn three wins in the club's first eight games since Lou Burdette in 1959.

When injuries hit the starting staff last August, Bobby Cox asked Villarreal to fill a rotation spot. Although he had only made one previous big league start, he performed



Villarreal has pitched in every inning except the first this year and is the only member of the Opening Day 2006 bullpen who's still working there.

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

well. The Braves won three of his four starts in which Villarreal posted a 3.50 ERA.

An extensive repertoire enables Villarreal to adapt to different roles and situations. His arm strength allows him to pitch multiple innings, something few relievers do anymore. McDowell believes he can use any of his pitches as an out pitch.

"He's got a really good moving fastball. He's come up with a little split-fingered fastball against left-handed batters. He has a very good slider, and he's able to change arm angles," said McDowell.

Villarreal was at his best from the middle of May through the end of June this season. He had a 1.96 ERA in a 15-appearance stretch totaling 23 innings, and he limited opponents to a .171 batting average.

"He has four good pitches, and he can use them at any point in the count," said Brian McCann. "His fastball is pretty good. With his fastball, a two-seamer, slider, and a changeup, he has four 'plus' pitches."

While he's excelled consistently, the unsung Villarreal has received few opportunities to preserve leads or pitch late in games this season. In fact, only five of his 28 appearances had come in Braves' victories.

This has not impacted Villarreal's performance. No matter what the circumstances, he does his best to keep the team in the game. Tough spots seem to bring out the best in him. He's escaped all three bases-loaded jams he's encountered this season without allowing a run. Of the 20 baserunners he's inherited, only five scored. Villarreal says he doesn't change his approach with runners on base.

"I just come in to get outs," he said. "I lock in and feel good when I'm in there. With runners on, I don't want the starting pitcher to have the runs [charged to him]. I try to throw strikes with the ball down, and let my team help me with the groundballs and flyballs."

Villarreal grew up in Nicolas de los Garza, Nuevo Leon, a suburb of Mexico's third-largest city, Monterrey. He says he can't pinpoint when he began playing baseball, because he started so young.

"I don't know, maybe in my mom's belly," he said with a laugh. "My big brother is 10 years older than me. When I came along, everybody played baseball."

In 1999, at age 17, Villarreal began playing minor league baseball for Tucson in the rookie-level Arizona League after the Diamondbacks signed him as a non-drafted free agent. Although he had been to the United States several times before – his hometown lies only 150 miles from the border – he didn't speak any English at the time.

"I'd go to Burger King, and it was hard for me to order a hamburger," recalled Villarreal. "Now I feel very good doing all that stuff."

A starter throughout most of his minor league career, Villarreal earned a spot in the Diamondbacks' bullpen to open the 2003 season. He made 86 appearances, the most ever by a National League rookie and the most ever by a Mexican. He also became the first 21-year-old in either league to make that many appearances. It wasn't just about quantity either. He was 10-7 with a 2.57 ERA and 10 holds, limiting hitters to a .222 batting average.

All the work took its toll, however, and he missed most of 2004 and 2005 with a bum elbow that required nerve transposition surgery. The Braves landed Villarreal and Lance Cormier in a Dec. 7, 2005, trade with Arizona for catcher Johnny Estrada.

Among Braves pitchers who have worked at least 100 innings since the start of 2006, only John Smoltz has a lower ERA than Villarreal.

SCOTT CUNNINGHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Villarreal has enjoyed his stay in Atlanta. When he gets free time during the season, he loves spending it with his two-year-old daughter, Valeria, and wife, Claudia.

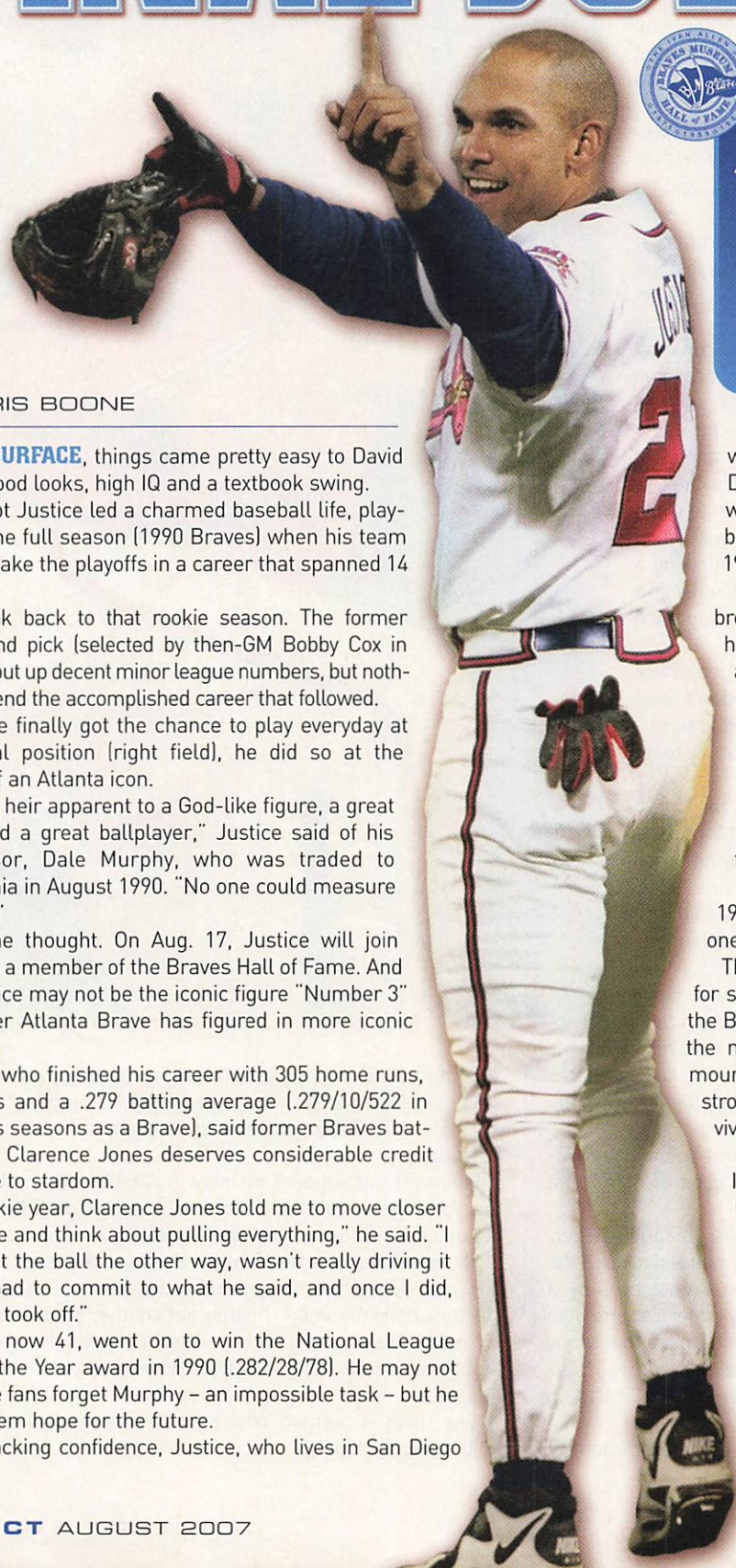
McDowell said he and Cox are comfortable using Villarreal in any role. Given the struggles by the Braves' fourth and fifth starters, does that mean he may get another shot at the rotation?

"Today, we're going to see if we can win this game," said McDowell in late June. "As far as down the road, we'll see what happens."

One thing is certain: Whatever the Braves ask of Villarreal, he'll be ready to help.

Hero of '95 World Series To Join Franchise Immortals

FINAL JUSTICE



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Inductee:
David Justice
Honorees:
1957 World Champion Milwaukee Braves

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ATLANTA BRAVES

BY CHRIS BOONE

ON THE SURFACE, things came pretty easy to David Justice: Good looks, high IQ and a textbook swing.

No doubt Justice led a charmed baseball life, playing only one full season (1990 Braves) when his team failed to make the playoffs in a career that spanned 14 years.

But think back to that rookie season. The former fourth-round pick (selected by then-GM Bobby Cox in 1985) had put up decent minor league numbers, but nothing to portend the accomplished career that followed.

When he finally got the chance to play everyday at his natural position (right field), he did so at the expense of an Atlanta icon.

"I'm the heir apparent to a God-like figure, a great person and a great ballplayer," Justice said of his predecessor, Dale Murphy, who was traded to Philadelphia in August 1990. "No one could measure up to him."

Or so he thought. On Aug. 17, Justice will join Murphy as a member of the Braves Hall of Fame. And while Justice may not be the iconic figure "Number 3" is, no other Atlanta Brave has figured in more iconic moments.

Justice, who finished his career with 305 home runs, 1,017 RBIs and a .279 batting average (.279/10/522 in seven-plus seasons as a Brave), said former Braves batting coach Clarence Jones deserves considerable credit for his rise to stardom.

"My rookie year, Clarence Jones told me to move closer to the plate and think about pulling everything," he said. "I couldn't hit the ball the other way, wasn't really driving it before. I had to commit to what he said, and once I did, everything took off."

Justice, now 41, went on to win the National League Rookie of the Year award in 1990 (.282/28/78). He may not have made fans forget Murphy – an impossible task – but he did give them hope for the future.

Never lacking confidence, Justice, who lives in San Diego with his wife, Rebecca, and three children, David Jr., 7, Dionisio, 5 and Raquel, 3, said he wasn't surprised when the team shocked the baseball world by going "Worst to First" in 1991.

"I totally saw it coming," said Justice, now a broadcaster with the New York Yankees. "We had some good teams in the minors. You think about it: (Steve) Avery, (Jeff) Blauser, (Mark) Lemke, (Ron) Gant. We all came up together. And not only were we good, but we believed we could win. None of us were scared of the big game."

Especially Justice, who can boast of two October moments Braves fans will never forget.

The first came on the first day of October, 1991, Braves vs. Reds. Atlanta entered the night one game behind the Dodgers with five to play.

Things didn't look good after the Reds exploded for six runs in the first off Charlie Leibrandt. But the Braves chipped back, closing the gap to one in the ninth. With Reds closer Rob Dibble on the mound and one out, Cincinnati native Justice strode to the plate. He remembers the moment vividly.

"TP (Terry Pendleton) had just flied out, and I remember so well him telling me to pick him up," he said. "I'm thinking to myself, 'Dibble always throws a first-pitch fastball, away.' I'm thinking, 'Just hit it up the middle.'"

Instead, he hit a mammoth home run to right-center. Without that homer, the

The Braves traded Dale Murphy to make room for David Justice in right field, and now he's proving the wisdom of that move by joining Murphy in the team's Hall of Fame.

BRAVES HALL OF FAME

1999
Hank Aaron, OF
(1954-74)
Eddie Mathews, 3B
(1952-66)
Phil Niekro, RHP
(1964-83, '87)
Warren Spahn, LHP
(1942, '46-64)

2000
Dale Murphy, OF
(1976-90)
Ted Turner, Owner
(1976-2000)

2001
Lou Burdette, RHP
(1951-63)
Ernie Johnson, Broadcaster
(1962-99)

2002
Bill Bartholomay, Executive
(1962-Present)
Johnny Sain, RHP
(1942, '46-51)

2003
Del Crandall, C
(1949-50, '53-63)

2004
Tommy Holmes, OF
(1942-51)
Kid Nichols, RHP
(1890-1901)
Skip Caray, Broadcaster
(1976-Present)
Pete Van Wieren, Broadcaster
(1976-Present)

2005
Herman Long, SS
(1890-1902)
Paul Snyder, Scout/Executive
(1966-Present)

2006
Ralph Garr, OF
(1968-75)
Bill Lucas, Executive
(1966-79)

2007
David Justice, OF
(1989-96)

Braves might have ended the night two games out of first, their playoff dreams dashed.

In 1995, they were still looking for their first World Series title. Once again, Justice – who drove in 67 runs in 112 post-season games - took center stage, though his heroics didn't come without controversy.

"Orel Hershiser had made a comment saying the Indians had no pressure, that all the pressure was on us," said Justice, referring to the World Series between the Braves and the Indians.

Hershiser's comments came before Game 6, with the Braves leading the series 3-2. "Then you've got Omar Vizquel saying the same thing, that we can't win it.

"That got my blood boiling. So I'm calling out Hershiser, and in the moment, I call out our fans."

"If we don't win, they'll probably burn our houses down," Justice said at the time.

Fans were not happy.

"I'm getting booed in my home stadium," he recalled.

The boos persisted until the sixth inning, when Justice led off against lefty Jim Poole, whom he had never before faced.

"I'm on my knees in the on-deck circle, and I could hear a few people clapping," he said. "I told myself I was going to play for those people."

As Clarence Jones had advised him years earlier, Justice sat on a fastball.

"I wasn't going to swing at a curveball unless I had two strikes on me," he said.

After working the count to 1-1, Justice got what he was looking for, and so did the fans who moments earlier were booing him. His home run was the lone run in the 1-0 victory that gave Atlanta its first and only world championship in a major pro sport.

"The weight of the world was off my shoulders," he said.

Looking back, "I wish I would've said things differently, but I wouldn't trade the result," he said.

Justice's Braves career came to an end after the 1996 season, when he was traded, along with Marquis Grissom, to the Indians for Kenny Lofton and Alan Embree.

"My world came crumbling down," he said. "I loved being a Brave. I loved Atlanta. There's no other team I wanted to play with. I was upset for a long time."

The hard feelings have since eroded.

"I don't take it personal anymore," Justice said. "He (John Schuerholz) did what he thought was best for the team."

In fact, it was Schuerholz who called Justice to tell him that he was entering the Braves Hall of Fame as the first player from that 1991 team to be inducted.

"It means a lot," said the former Indian, Yankee and Athletic. "I'm a Brave, first and foremost."

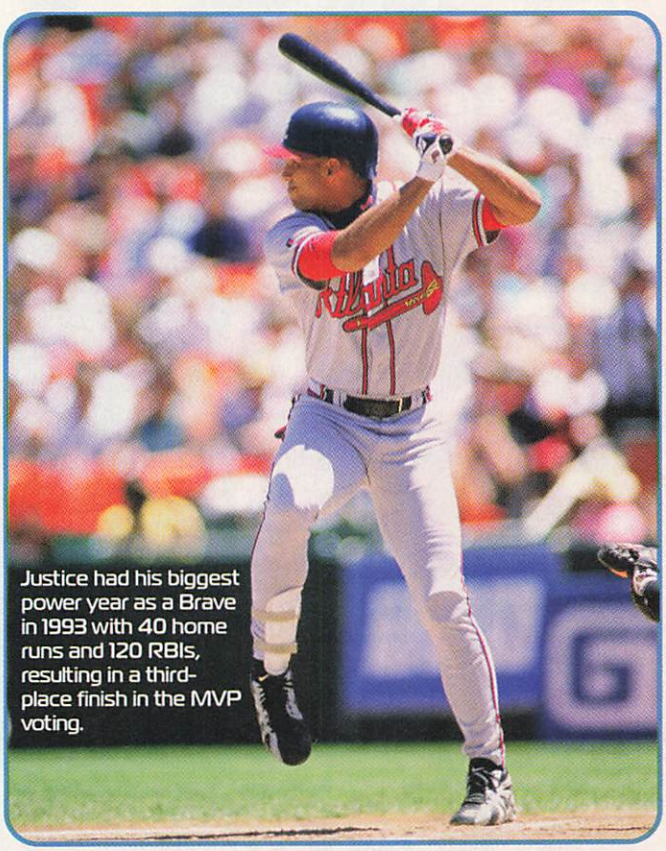
Still, Justice is a little anxious to see how he'll be received upon his return to Atlanta. As part of the induction ceremonies, he will be honored on the field prior to the game that night against Arizona.

"I don't know how the people of Atlanta feel about me," he said. "Good, I hope."

Carolyn Serra, director of the Braves Museum, said anticipation is high for Justice's return.

"We've got David Justice fans coming in from all over the place," she said. "There is a tremendous amount of interest in this year's ceremony."

At the induction luncheon, the Braves also will recognize the 50th anniversary of the 1957 Milwaukee Braves who defeated the Yankees in the World Series. Select members of that team, including Hank Aaron, will attend, Serra said.

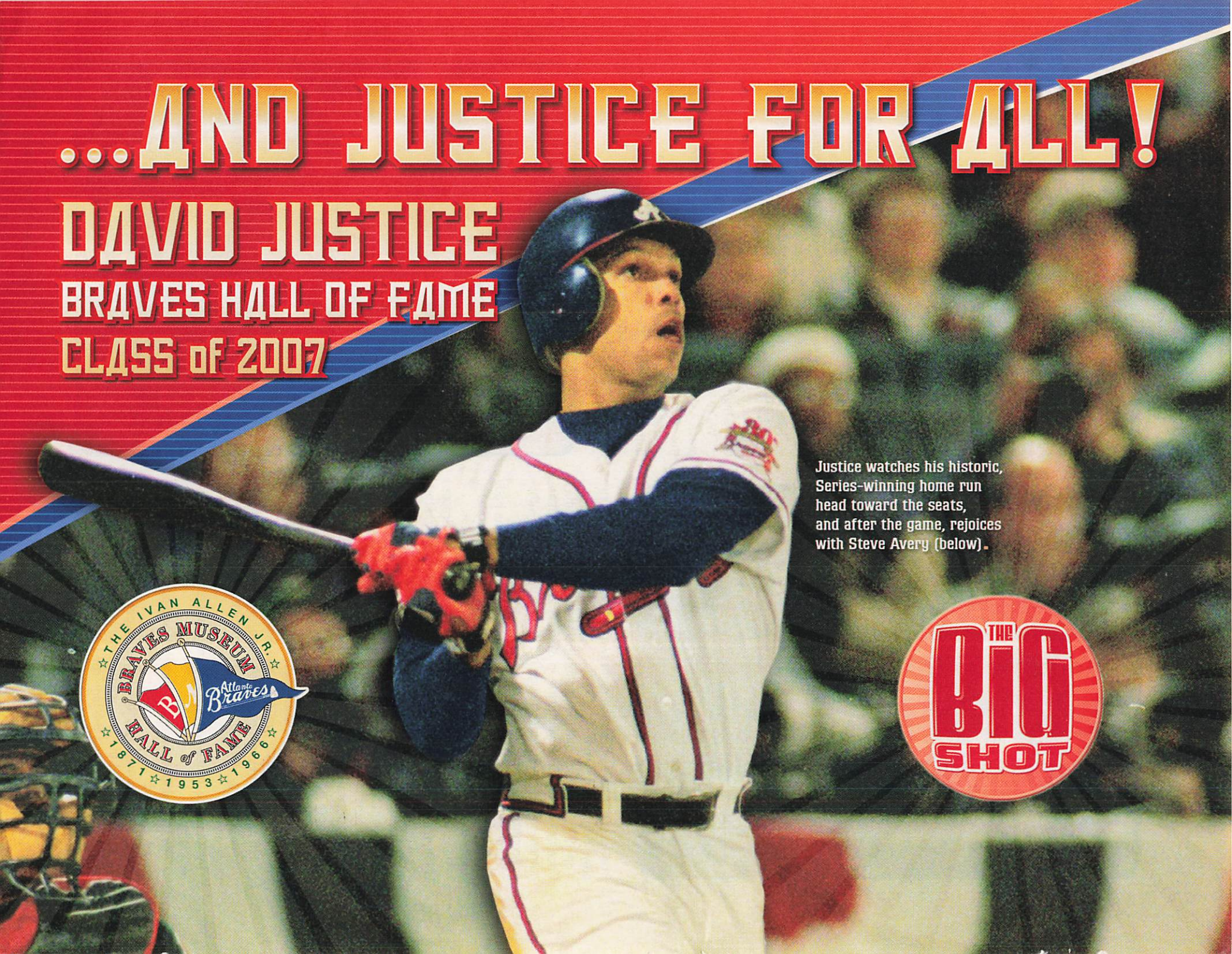


Justice had his biggest power year as a Brave in 1993 with 40 home runs and 120 RBIs, resulting in a third-place finish in the MVP voting.

...AND JUSTICE FOR ALL!

DAVID JUSTICE

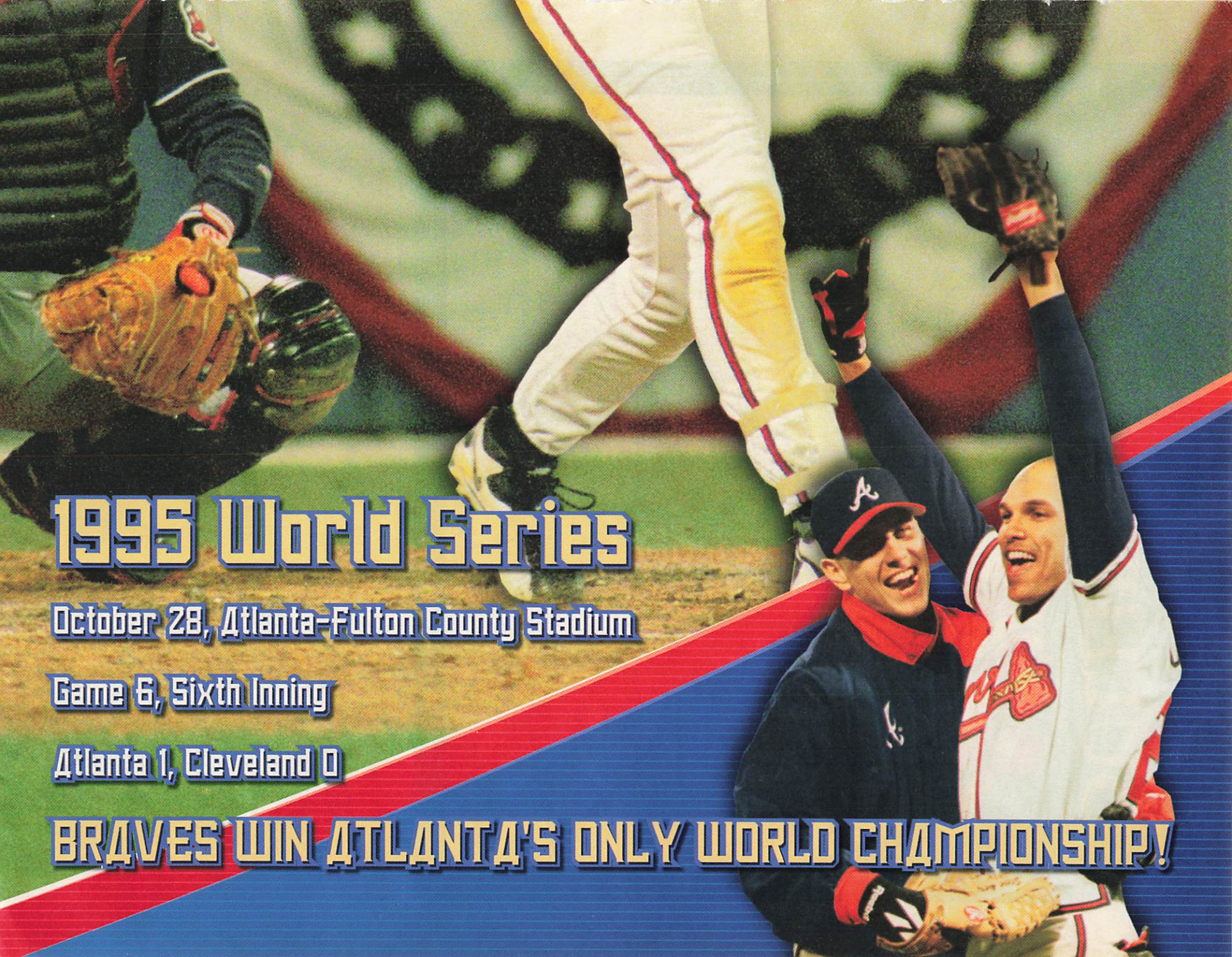
BRAVES HALL OF FAME CLASS of 2007



Justice watches his historic, Series-winning home run head toward the seats, and after the game, rejoices with Steve Avery (below).

THE IVAN ALLEN JR. BRAVES MUSEUM HALL of FAME 1871 1953 1966

THE BIG SHOT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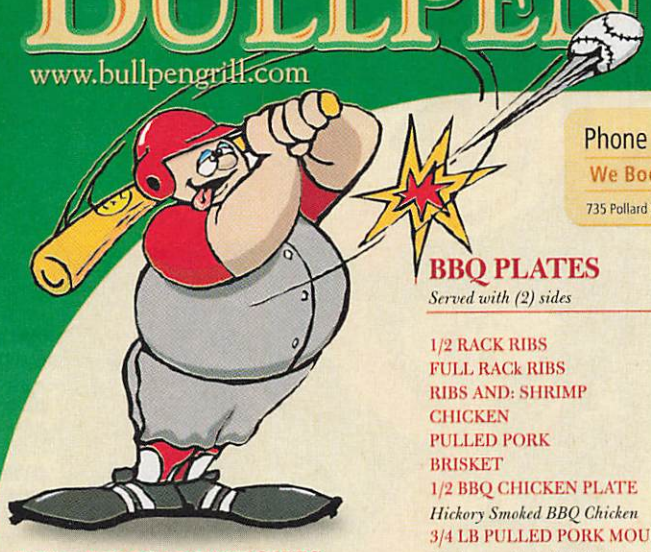

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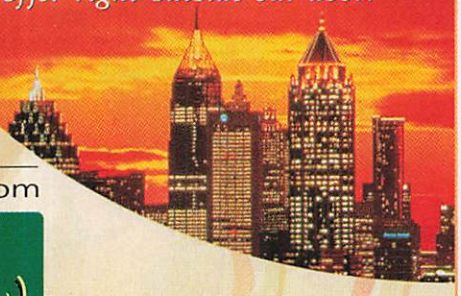

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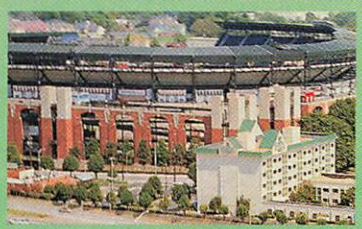

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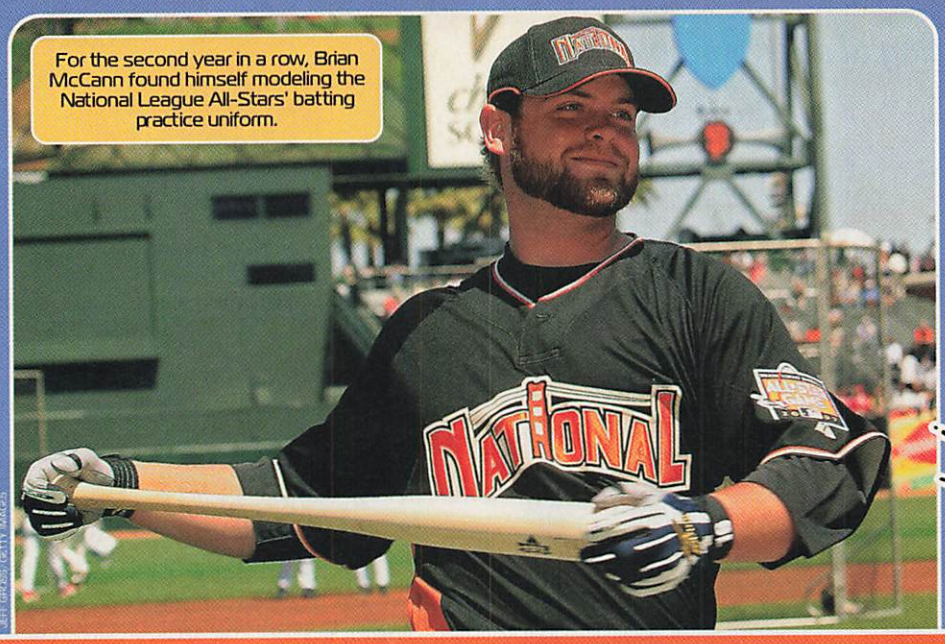

For the second year in a row, Brian McCann found himself modeling the National League All-Stars' batting practice uniform.

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MID-SUMMER REFRESHER

McCANN HOPES TRIP TO CLASSIC AND LESSONS FROM HIS FATHER PUT BAT BACK IN GROOVE

BY MARK BOWMAN OF MLB.COM

THREE HOURS BEFORE the start of the All-Star Game, Howie and Sherry McCann had already taken their seats above third base at AT&T Park. Still more than four hours away from watching their 23-year-old son participate in his second consecutive Mid-Summer Classic, the proud parents were already beaming with euphoric excitement.

As they made their way to the ballpark, they'd stopped throughout downtown San Francisco to watch the world's greatest baseball players parade their way to the same destination. Whatever happened over the next few hours would simply be viewed as a bonus to them.

That same cavalcade of Chevrolets that carried Ichiro Suzuki and Alex Rodriguez also included their son, Brian McCann. Though they'd thoroughly enjoyed this same sight just a year ago in Pittsburgh, they still found themselves feeling chills - created by the tangible reality that their youngest child truly has earned the right to be considered one of the game's best.

"It doesn't seem real," said Sherry, who still has vivid memories of that first all-star team Brian played for in 1993 in Huntington, W. Va., where Howie served as Marshall University's head baseball coach.

Much has changed in the 14 years that have followed. That pudgy 9-year-old all-star has gained a strong 6-foot-3, 225-pound frame, and he's developed a picturesque swing that allows him to be considered one of baseball's best young catchers. But more importantly, he's become a man who is also respected for his non-baseball-related virtues.

"I've gotten a chance to hang around Brian the last couple of days and he's awesome," said Dodgers catcher Russell Martin. "He's just a good all-around dude. He's really confident on the field. But off the field, he's just one of the guys."

After Martin, who served as the National League's starting catcher, exited at the end of the sixth inning, McCann entered the game and got his first and only at-bat in the ninth, when Mariners closer J.J. Putz got him to hit a lazy pop fly to shortstop Carlos Guillen for the second out of the inning.

Two batters later, Alfonso Soriano followed with a two-run homer that prolonged a thrilling finish that eventually ended with Philadelphia's Aaron Rowand flying out to right with the bases loaded.

Although the American League continued its All-Star Game dominance with a 5-4 win over the NL, McCann still thoroughly enjoyed his second consecutive Mid-Summer Classic appearance.

"It was a blast. I enjoyed it a little more this year," said McCann, the first Braves catcher to make back-to-back All-Star appearances since Javy Lopez in 1997-98. "Last year, it seemed like it all went by so fast."

As his parents were enjoying the pre-game activities, which included a chance to see their son participate in a tribute to Giants great Willie Mays, Brian was taking advantage of the opportunity to mingle with his NL teammates. Having been away from Atlanta since the Braves left town on June 27, he was fatigued and was looking forward to returning home the following day.

But at the same time, McCann was excited to get the second half of the season started. There's no doubt that he wants to improve his .262 batting average. But most importantly, he wants to do whatever it takes to help the Braves, who entered the All-Star break trailing the front-running Mets by just two games in the National League East race.

"I really like our team," he said. "I like the way things stack up

right now."

While he battled injuries that led to the first extended slump of his young career during the first half, McCann remains positive, a product of the encouragement that he receives from Bobby Cox, Braves hitting coach Terry Pendleton, and his father, an eternal optimist.

Another man who benefited from Howie's optimistic outlook while playing at Rollins College more than 25 years ago was Jim Guadagno, a long-time member of the Braves' support staff who is currently employed by Mizuno USA.

As he was walking back to his San Francisco hotel prior to the All-Star Game, Guadagno pointed to a light pole and said, "See that light pole? Howie McCann could talk it into being a .300 hitter."

When informed of this complimentary statement about his father, the Braves catcher laughed and confirmed there was some truth behind it.

"He's just a very positive person, and as a hitter, you need that," Brian said of his father, who continues to teach the art of hitting at his Windward Baseball Academy in suburban Atlanta. "You need somebody who is going to instill some confidence in you. Terry Pendleton is the same way. I've been surrounded by great hitting coaches."

In his first full major league season last year, McCann earned both his first All-Star selection and his first NL Silver Slugger Award. These came courtesy of the .333 batting average and 24 homers that he compiled.

Before bruising his left ring finger on April 22 this year, he was hitting .339, prolonging his 2006 success.

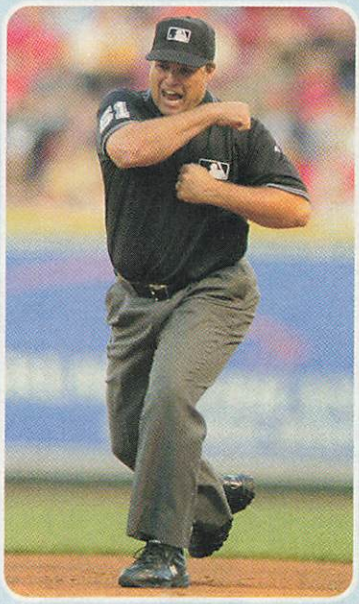
But over the course of the next 42 games, McCann batted just .229 and found himself battling mounting frustrations. This, combined with the fact that he needed to issue a personal Father's Day greeting, prompted him to visit his father at his instructional facility after the Braves returned from Cleveland late on the evening of June 17.

"We were there until 1 [a.m.], and he was sweating like a dog," Howie said. "We were joking with him, telling him, 'You've got to get back to your roots.' We just wanted to get back to the basics. Everybody knew he was going to come out of it."

Over the course of the 17 games that followed, McCann hit just .259. But at the same time, he's collected five of the nine homers this season and put himself on pace for 89 RBIs - which would be just four shy of last year's total.

HOW I MADE IT TO THE MAJORS

MARVIN HUDSON
MAJOR LEAGUE UMPIRE


SPECIAL

BY STEVE FALL

WHILE ATTENDING high school in the Atlanta suburb of Marietta, Marvin Hudson worked at Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium selling ice cream and spinning cotton candy.

Over two decades later, Hudson returned to Atlanta as the home plate umpire for Game 2 of the 2005 Division Series. John Smoltz opposed Roger Clemens in that game, which the Braves won, 7-1, at Turner Field. Hudson was chosen to umpire the 2004 All-Star Game, too.

Although some may think its fun to travel and be in the spotlight, Hudson explained that fans never glimpse a major part of the umpire's job.

"They don't see all the downtime when we're sitting in a hotel room, or in an airport waiting on flights that might be cancelled," said Hudson, who worked his first big league game in 1998. "All the fans see is what happens on the field. They don't see all the other things that go along with the job."

Hudson now makes his home in Washington, Ga. He finds being away from his family the toughest part of the job. But he also admits that he gets "antsy" every February when a new season approaches.

The 43-year-old Hudson grew up a huge Braves fan. He said that he gets to know the players, especially the catchers, but it's an on-field professional relationship. They don't get together off the field.

Hudson keeps busy during the season. He started an organization called "Blue for Kids" in 2004. About seven or eight of the big league umpires are also involved. They provide game tickets to underprivileged youth and children coping with illnesses, and visit children's hospitals to offer words of encouragement.

Hudson was a catcher for Piedmont College in Demorest, Ga. During school, he officiated football and basketball. After graduating in 1986, he umpired small college baseball games. He later decided to try for Division I college baseball, and attended the Southern Umpires Camp in Atlanta. His strong performance there drew the attention of major league umpires like Joe Brinkman, Gerry Davis, Terry Tata and Bruce Froemming.

"They told me I should go to umpire school," said Hudson, who took their advice the following year. "I wound up doing really well at Joe's school – actually I finished first – and got a job in 1992. I started working professional ball that year in the Appalachian League."

Hudson also umpired in the South Atlantic League, Florida Instructional League, Florida State League, Southern League, and the International League. He earned a permanent big league assignment in 1999.

In order to make it to the majors, Hudson said that umpires must first attend umpire school. After that, they need to pay their dues in the minor leagues. Earning respect from colleagues can shorten the path.

"Earn a reputation as a hard worker," said Hudson. "Give your all – day in and day out. If you get known as a hard worker out there, then things will fall into place."

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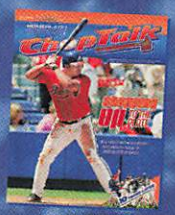

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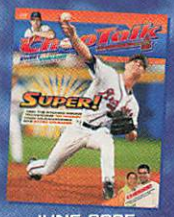

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AUGUST 2005
KYLE DAVIES

AUGUST 2005
JOHNSON & LANGERHANS

SEPTEMBER 2005
JEFF FRANCOEUR

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ANDRUW JONES

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BRIAN MCCANN

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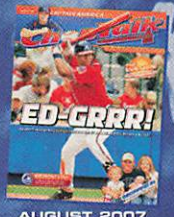

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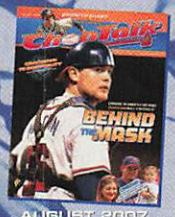

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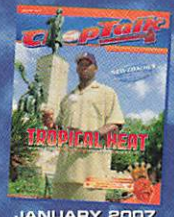

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CHIPPER CLIMBING TEAM, SWITCH-HITTER CHARTS

BY STEVE FALL

CHIPPER JONES has entered the stage of his career when reaching milestones becomes a frequent event.

In June, Jones became the first Atlanta Brave with 2,000 career hits. In franchise history, that trails only Hank Aaron (3,600) and Eddie Mathews (2,201). Then on July 5, he hit two home runs at Dodger Stadium to give him 372 for his career - passing Dale Murphy for the Atlanta record. In franchise history, again only Aaron (733) and Mathews (493) lie ahead of him after passing Murphy. The same goes for runs batted in. Aaron (2,202), Mathews (1,388), and Jones (1,234) fill the top three spots.

Jones fares equally well when it comes to qualitative statistics. His .305 batting average ranks ninth among franchise players with at least 2,000 at-bats. But that list includes some pre-1900 ballplayers.

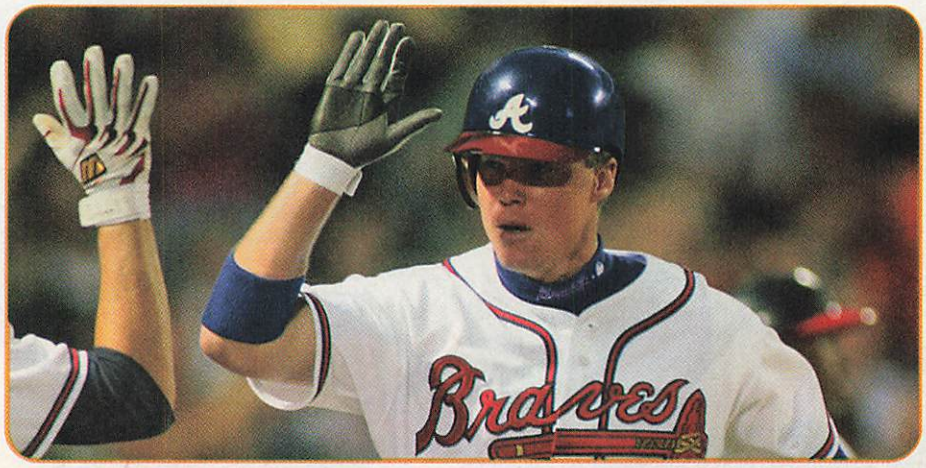
Using numbers since 1900 (modern era), Jones rises to fifth behind Ralph Garr (.317), Rico Carty (.317), Lance Richbourg (.311) and Aaron (.310). His .402 on-base percentage leads all post-1900 Braves. His .543 slugging percentage tops everyone in franchise history except Aaron (.567).

Jones has also joined some exclusive company among switch-hitters. He recently got his 400th career double, making him the third switch-hitter in baseball history with 2,000 hits, 350 home runs, and 400 doubles. Only Eddie Murray and Chili Davis reached those levels.

Similar to a quarterback who runs like a tailback, or a 7-0 center who knocks down three-pointers, Jones is a rare switch-hitter with power.

In baseball history, 316 switch-hitters have had at least 1,000 at-bats. Among them, only two others besides Jones – Mickey Mantle and Murray – hit at least 370 home runs. That means less than one percent (0.95) of the switch-hitters with 1,000 at-bats hit 370 home runs. Right- and left-handed batters do this with far greater frequency.

The few switch-hitters possessing power almost never combine that with the ability to hit for average. The Braves third baseman again breaks the mold. Jones is one of three switch-hitters with at least 200 home runs and a .300 career batting average.



ALLISON SHRREFFS

On July 5, Chipper hit two home runs to move past Dale Murphy (371) for the all-time Atlanta home run lead.

Lance Berkman (225 HR, .301 BA) and Roberto Alomar (210, .300) have also reached these levels.

By the time Jones' career concludes, he should join Mantle as the top two switch-hitters in baseball history.

When Braves fans talk about big game performers, the name David Justice often comes up. However, he played his best ball during the regular season. That helped his teams reach the playoffs in 11 consecutive seasons.

Although his home run in Game 6 of the 1995 World Series was the biggest homer in club history, from a team perspective, Justice's overall post-season numbers were nothing special. He had a .224 batting average, .335 on-base percentage, and .382 slugging percentage in 398 at-bats. He produced slightly better post-season numbers in a Braves uniform (.224 BA, .359 OBP, .379 SLG).

When Justice connected for his landmark homer off Indians reliever Jim Poole in 1995, it ended a lengthy power drought. He had gone 69 post-season at-bats without a home run. His last previous post-season homer was in Game 5 of the 1992 World Series versus Toronto.

Justice did come through in other key moments during October. His 63 post-season RBIs rank second all-time, trailing only Bernie Williams (80).

Without the next Braves Hall of Famer (Aug. 17 induction) in the lineup, some of Justice's teams would not have reached the post-season. His clubs made the playoffs every season from 1991 through 2002 (Braves 1991-96, Cleveland 1997-99, Yankees 2000-01, Oakland 2002).

Justice had a huge impact on the success of all those clubs. He was the Braves' biggest offensive force through the first part of their run. From 1990 through 1995, Justice hit 153 homers. Ron Gant came next among Braves players with 117 home runs, followed by Fred McGriff (80).

Justice, who reached base at a high rate and never posted high strikeout figures, had a .374 on-base percentage and .501 slugging percentage in that same time frame. Both figures trailed only McGriff among teammates with 1,000 at-bats.

Matt Diaz may not play every day, but he makes the most of his opportunities. His .343 batting average this season lifted his career figure as a Brave to .333.

Only four players in franchise history had an average that high in at least 500 plate appearances with the club, and three of them played a long time ago. Rogers Hornsby (.387), Dan Brouthers (.373), Billy Hamilton (.338), and Kenny Lofton (.333) also reached this level. Both Brouthers and Hamilton starred in the 19th century.

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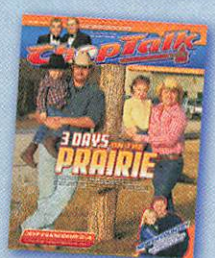

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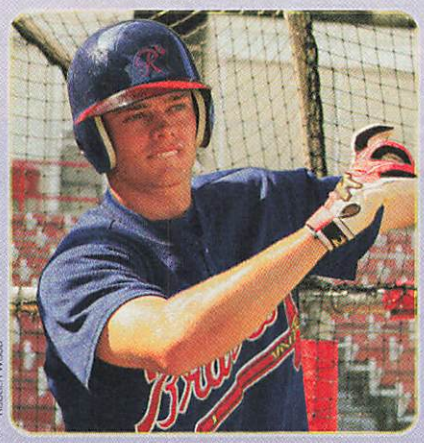
LILLIBRIDGE, ANDRUS HIGHLIGHT STRONG ALL-STAR PRESENCE

IF ANYONE WONDERED about the depth at shortstop in the Atlanta farm system, a glimpse at the July 8 All-Star Futures Game in San Francisco answered any questions. The Braves had a player at the position on both teams, with Richmond's Brent Lillibridge starting for the United States and Myrtle Beach's Elvis Andrus handling a reserve role for the World team.

Acquired last winter from Pittsburgh as part of the deal that sent Adam LaRoche to the Pirates, Lillibridge opened the season by hitting .275 with 14 stolen bases at Double-A Mississippi prior to a June 1 promotion to Triple-A. The shortstop, who struck out twice in two at-bats in the Futures Game, has continued his rapid ascent through the organization with the R-Braves by serving as an ideal leadoff man, batting .260 in 34 games with 12 stolen bases in his first 13 attempts.

Andrus, at age 18 one of the youngest players at the advanced Class-A level, has spent the entire season in the Carolina League. Although he was hitless in two at-bats in the Futures Game, Andrus has shown a better recognition of the strike zone and made adjustments to hitting breaking balls with more consistency in the past month. The shortstop had a 14-game hitting streak snapped on July 5, during which he went 21-for-60 with five doubles and 12 RBIs.



ROGER WOOD

Brent Lillibridge, acquired in the Adam LaRoche trade, is advancing quickly through the farm system.

Lillibridge and Andrus were not the only Braves at the Futures Game. Richmond manager Dave Brundage served as a coach for the U.S. team, and R-Braves pitching coach Guy Hansen served in the same capacity for the World squad.

Several other Braves prospects participated in league all-star games. Manny Acosta was the lone R-Brave selected to play in the Triple-A All-Star Game on July 11 in Albuquerque. The 26-year-old right-handed closer from Panama earned his first invitation to an all-star game at any professional level after posting a 7-3 record with a 2.20 ERA and nine saves in the first half.

At the advanced Class-A level, Moises Hernandez was the only Pelican selected to participate in the Carolina League-California League All-Star Game on June 19. Hernandez allowed two hits, two walks and two earned runs in an inning of work in the game played in Stockton, Calif.

The Braves hosted two all-star games - the Southern League game at Pearl, Miss., on July 9, and the South Atlantic League game at Rome on June 19.

The Mississippi Braves had nine players selected to the Southern League game. Managed by Phillip Wellman by virtue of Mississippi winning the first-half in the Southern Division, the home team's first five hitters mirrored that of the M-Braves: second baseman J.C. Holt, centerfielder Carl Loadenthal, leftfielder Brandon Jones, rightfielder Matt Esquivel and third baseman Diory Hernandez. Holt went 3-for-4 with a walk and a run, while Loadenthal was 3-for-5 with a run scored. Matt Harrison started and pitched 1 2/3 scoreless innings. Relievers Zach Schreiber and Jose Ascanio also did not allow any runs while pitching 1 1/3 innings and one inning, respectively.

Jo-Jo Reyes and Joey Devine were selected to the game but did not participate since they were on the Atlanta roster at the time.

In Rome, righthanders Tommy Hanson, Deunte Heath and Kris Medlen were selected to the Southern Division's pitching staff, and outfielder Concepcion Rodriguez was named as a reserve. Rodriguez had a single in two at-bats, Medlen struck out the two batters he faced in the ninth inning, and Hanson did not play. Heath took the loss after he gave up three runs (two earned) and two hits in the fourth inning. Manager Randy Ingle and hitting coach Bobby Moore served on the squad's coaching staff.

ORGANIZATIONAL

THE BRAVES are continuing negotiations with first-round draft pick **Jason Heyward**. Selected as the 14th overall pick in the 2007 draft out of Henry County High School in McDonough, Ga., Heyward was one of three outfielders named to the USA Today's All-USA High School first-team baseball squad.

RICHMOND

TRIPLE A

THE R-BRAVES entered the four-day All-Star break in first place with a 48-38 record, 4 1/2 games ahead of Durham in the International League's South Division. Richmond was the only team in the minor leagues atop its division with a sub-.500 record at home (19-20)...

Prior to his promotion to Atlanta on July 7, **Jo-Jo Reyes** was practically untouchable during his short stay in Richmond. The lefthander went 2-0 with a 1.57 ERA in four starts with the R-Braves, including nine strikeouts in five shutout innings versus Columbus on July 2. Since the beginning of the 2006 season, Reyes is 22-6 with a 3.34 ERA at the minor league level, posting 240 strikeouts in 237 1/3 innings...

Trey Hodges is making steady progress

from surgery on the base of his right index finger that cost him more than a season. Hodges' finger problem caused him to be released from the Atlanta organization in June 2005, and subsequent surgery forced him to miss the 2006 season. He struggled early this year in the Richmond rotation before being sent to the bullpen. Hodges has regained the feel of all his pitches and has returned to starting, which led to his limiting opponents to one earned run and six hits in his last 15 1/3 innings, a span of four appearances from June 25-July 7...

Second baseman **Martin Prado** was named the IL Player of the Week on July 2 after he hit .433 with a home run and seven RBIs in seven games. Prado, who struggled at the plate earlier this season, has regained his stroke that has led several of the organization's instructors to describe the infielder's bat as "a magic wand." He had an eight-game hitting streak through July 7, including the first inside-the-park home run of his career on July 6. He also went 52 games without committing an error...

Blaine Boyer, a standout rookie reliever with Atlanta in 2005 before missing most of last season, has moved into the Richmond rotation in order to work more innings. The righthander underwent right shoulder surgery in 2006...

The R-Braves' 3-2 victory at Columbus on July 3 marked the 700th managerial win in **Dave Brundage**'s career. Brundage is in his 10th season as a minor league manager, his first in the Atlanta organization...

Richmond had experienced 70 roster moves through the all-star break. Among the ailing is outfielder **T.J. Bohn**, who is expected to miss the rest of the season after recent tests revealed two tears in his hamstring...

Dan Smith has not pitched since June 19 due to a sore shoulder. The Braves are being cautious with Smith's return since this is the second time this season the lefthander has experienced the problem.

MISSISSIPPI
DOUBLE A

J.C. HOLT was a late addition to the South team for the Southern League All-Star Game, but the second baseman deserved the recognition nonetheless. Holt entered the game with a .322 batting average and a .389 on-base percentage as the Mississippi leadoff man. Holt, who was selected to his first professional all-star game, has had poor first halves in the past but is in the midst of putting together his most complete season since he was a third-round pick out of LSU in 2004...

Despite battling a sore wrist, **Brandon Jones** led the Southern League with 64 RBIs heading into the all-star break. The leftfielder also equaled his longest hitting streak of the season when he hit safely in his seventh straight game on July 8...

Jose Ascanio has been overpowering hitters out of the Mississippi bullpen. Ascanio has a 97 mph fastball and has been invaluable as a setup man. The righthander put together 8 2/3 scoreless innings over four appearances from June 26-July 6, and gave up only three earned runs over 10 outings, covering 18 innings...

The M-Braves received righthander **Moises Hernandez** for the second time this season when he was promoted to the Southern League on July 2. Hernandez, who earned his team-best 10th victory with Myrtle Beach on June 29, was tied for the Carolina League lead in wins at the time of his promotion...

TOP 10 CHOPTALK PROSPECTS

1. Brandon Jones, LF, age 23, Mississippi. Stellar athlete who ranks among the Southern League leaders in home runs and RBIs.
2. Jo-Jo Reyes, LHP, 22, Richmond/Atlanta. After cruising through Mississippi and Richmond, reached Atlanta in early July.
3. Elvis Andrus, SS, 18, Myrtle Beach. Incredibly gifted infielder that is making steady progress in the field and at the plate.
4. Matt Harrison, LHP, 22, Mississippi. Started the Southern League All-Star Game and could be in Richmond soon.
5. Tommy Hanson, RHP, 20, Myrtle Beach. Recent promotion to Carolina League after a solid three months in the South Atlantic League has him on the fast track.
6. Brent Lillibridge, SS, 23, Richmond. Futures Game participant was in low Class A in early 2006 but is now knocking on the door to the big leagues.
7. Kala Ka'aihue, 1B, 22, Myrtle Beach. Hard-hitting Hawaiian has as much pure power as any player in the minors.
8. Joey Devine, RHP, 23, Mississippi/Atlanta. Revamped mechanics to regain status as the Braves' future closer.
9. Jordan Schafer, CF, 20, Myrtle Beach. Defensive stalwart who could be a future Gold Glover is now hitting nearly as well as he fields.
10. Jamie Richmond, RHP, 21, Rome. Canadian has been one of the high points at Rome thus far in 2007.

The 2007 season was expected to be a homecoming for **Van Pope**, who solidified his spot as a top prospect with an impressive 2006 season at Myrtle Beach and was slated to return to the area in which he grew up and attended Meridian Community College. Pope, however, struggled during the first two months and batted just .150 before rebounding to hit .306 in June and .346 in his first seven games in July. Despite his offensive difficulties, Pope's defense at third base has remained outstanding. He's committed only three errors, and had a streak of 36 games without an error...

Lefthander **Kelvin Villa** has been hot and cold throughout the first three-plus months. Villa owned a 6-6 record and a 5.34 ERA, yet had won three straight home starts, beginning with the first-half clincher on June 17.

MYRTLE BEACH
ADVANCED A

JONNY VENTERS earned his first victory since July 29, 2005, when he worked eight innings in the Pelicans' 5-1 win over Potomac on June 27. He then picked up another win on July 7 by allowing only one single in six shutout innings. The lefthander, who missed all of last season after undergoing ligament replacement surgery, struggled with his mechanics during the first half. With the help of pitching coach **Bruce Dal Canton**, Venters has revamped his mechanics with a more compact delivery...

First baseman **Kala Ka'aihue** was named the Carolina League's Player of the Month for June after he hit .378 and led the league with nine home runs, 25 RBIs and 70 total bases. He also walked 20 times during the month...

Outfielder **Jordan Schafer** continues to produce at the plate. The Braves are raving about the adjustments the speedy centerfielder continues to make since his promotion to Myrtle Beach in May. In addition to his standout performance in the outfield, Schafer put together an eight-game hitting streak from June 29-July 7...

Fellow outfielder **Roberto Alvarez** is also handling the bat well, putting together a 12-game hitting streak from June 27-July 8, during which he batted .417 to increase

his batting average to .276...

After a dismal start that included an 0-8 record, **Jairo Cuevas** has made minor alterations in his mechanics and adjusted to more experienced hitters to put together seven straight solid starts through July 9. Cuevas had a 1.59 ERA during that span and struck out 52 in 45 innings. He went 4-0 with a 1.41 ERA in five June outings and 2-0 with a 2.08 ERA in his first two July appearances...

The Pelicans received **Tyler Bullock** from Mississippi after the righthander spent six weeks in Double-A, going 1-0 with a 7.36 ERA. Bullock provided a consistent presence in the Myrtle Beach bullpen during the season's first two months. His return in early July coincided with pitcher **Jang Ji Cho** being sent to extended spring training...

Third baseman **Eric Campbell** endured a first half to forget. He hit just .198 and missed a month with a ligament injury in his left thumb. The fresh start of the season's second half coincided with better production from the third baseman's bat, leading to Carolina League Player of the Week honors after he hit .550 and posted five straight multi-hit games from June 18-24.

ROME
CLASS A

JAMIE RICHMOND has made steady progress over the course of the season. In a 12-start stretch through early July, the 2006 Appalachian League Pitcher of the Year posted a 2.15 ERA and a 3-3 record. Richmond has overcome a slow start by registering a 2.28 ERA in May and a 1.64 ERA in June. On July 2, Richmond allowed Charleston only one run on five hits in 7 1/3 innings to pick up the victory...

Rome lost three of its top pitchers to promotions to Myrtle Beach on July 2. **Tommy Hanson**, who paced the South Atlantic League in strikeouts for much of the season, was a hard-luck pitcher by posting a 2.59 ERA in 15 outings and had only a 2-6 record to show for it. The righthander allowed only 51 hits in 73 innings and limited opponents to a .194 batting average despite missing two weeks in June with back spasms. In his first start with the Pelicans, on July 4, Hanson allowed Potomac only four hits and one run in five innings...

The Braves also lost **Kris Medlen** and **Deunte Heath** to the Pelicans. Medlen was one of the SAL's top closers, recording eight saves and a 0.87 ERA, and concluded his time in Rome with 14 straight scoreless out-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45

WE WANT TO WIN IT ALL, NOT JUST THE FIRST HALF

SO FAR THIS SEASON, I believe things have been going good for both the team and me. We won the first half, and I'm putting up the best numbers of my career so far.

As a player, though, you can never be satisfied. That's why I just want to keep doing the things I've been doing and finish the season on a strong note. Putting together a complete season, from the beginning to the end, is what my goal is.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Brandon Jones is a 23-year-old outfielder who signed with the Braves in May 2004 out of Tallahassee (Fla.) Community College. The 6-1, 210-pounder bats left but throws right. Managers voted him the "best power prospect" in the advanced Class-A Carolina League last season, and he's continuing to show that promise at Double-A Mississippi this year.

One of the things I'm most pleased about is the way I've improved in all aspects of my game. It's not really just one part, but everything coming together in order to be a complete player.

I've always worked hard every day I go to the ballpark, but this year I believe I've worked harder than I ever have. It's definitely rewarding to have good things come from the effort you put into getting better.

I know several people have talked about my background in football. To me, that's all in the past. I've been playing baseball since I was eight or nine years old, and I feel very comfortable every time I go out on the field.

I was here in Mississippi at the end of last season, and there really hasn't been anything different this year compared to when I moved up in 2006. It's the same game, regardless of which level you're playing.

The goal is to get a good pitch and hit it. In the outfield, I see the ball and go catch it. I guess the biggest difference centers on my confidence. I know what to expect at the Double-A level, and I know that I'm capable of having success.

> "ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF MY CAREER SO FAR TOOK PLACE IN JULY WHEN I PARTICIPATED IN THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE ALL-STAR GAME."

I feel my defense has really improved. Every day during batting practice, I shag fly balls for the first two rounds. I'm not out there just walking after the balls. I'm reading the ball off the bat every single time, and that has really helped me get better jumps on balls and make plays that I might not otherwise have made.

One of the highlights of my career so far took place in July when I participated in the Southern League All-Star Game. It was a real honor to play alongside the best players in the league. I was real happy to be a part of that, hanging out with the players on other teams and getting to know them.

You look back on the history of that game, and there are a lot of guys who went on to become big contributors at the major league level. Some guys say they would rather have a few days off than go to an all-star game, but I didn't feel that way at all. I enjoyed it and tried to take everything in.

One other thing that made this year's All-Star Game so special for me was the fact that my mother and my uncle were able to come. Sometimes fans may not realize how important it is for a player to have the support of all his friends and family during his career. To have my mother and my uncle come see me in my first professional all-star game was special and something I'll never forget.

Another big thing for me was winning the Southern Division in the first half. That was a wonderful accomplishment. Everybody is talking about going to the playoffs, but I know every player wants to do more than that.

We're a close team, with everyone supporting one another. We want to win the championship and use that as momentum while working our way to the big leagues.

Like any player, my goal is to keep doing whatever it takes to get to Atlanta. I believe the key for me is to keep playing as hard as I can every time I take the field.

FARM STATISTICS

RICHMOND 49-38

INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE TRIPLE A | THE DIAMOND (804) 359-4444

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Bigbie, Larry (OF)	.269	24	78	11	21	6	0	1	9	10	16	3
Blanco, Gregor (OF)	.278	85	316	59	88	14	4	2	25	43	51	17
Bohn, T.J. (OF)	.241	46	145	20	35	8	0	1	14	21	41	8
Canizares, Barbaro (1B)	.304	20	56	8	17	4	0	1	14	8	12	0
Clark, Doug (OF)	.254	83	283	41	72	15	1	8	43	30	57	12
Franco, Iker (C)	.208	35	106	10	22	5	0	1	13	10	19	0
Holt, J.C. (2B)	.292	13	48	10	14	4	0	0	3	4	8	3
Koonce, Graham (1B)	.218	52	170	19	37	9	0	10	40	22	49	0
Lillibridge, Brent (SS)	.260	34	127	15	33	3	0	2	7	7	26	12
McCarthy, Bill (OF)	.224	49	165	19	37	7	2	5	18	14	45	2
Mendez, Carlos (1B)	.274	55	186	20	51	13	0	6	24	8	30	0
Miller, Corky (C)	.201	52	149	8	30	7	0	2	15	21	22	3
Pena, Brayan (OF/C/1B)	.324	47	170	19	55	9	1	3	29	6	21	3
Prado, Martin (INF)	.313	70	262	44	82	16	3	2	27	28	28	4
Schuerholz, Jonathan (INF)	.208	38	96	14	20	5	0	0	12	12	15	5
Timmons, Wes (3B/1B)	.254	72	213	28	54	11	0	2	26	13	18	6

PITCHER	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Acosta, Manny	7-3	2.20	32	0	9	49.0	37	15	12	28	43	.215
Baerlocher, Ryan	1-3	3.76	7	7	0	40.2	44	17	17	13	23	.282
Barry, Kevin	4-3	3.67	14	13	0	68.2	69	32	28	23	53	.271
Basner, Ryan	3-3	3.61	14	4	0	47.1	44	21	19	14	40	.249
Bennett, Jeff	0-3	3.10	22	1	1	40.2	38	14	14	21	22	.252
Boyer, Blaine	1-0	5.09	13	6	2	35.1	35	21	20	29	32	.278
Bush, Paul	1-0	1.74	5	0	1	10.1	5	2	2	5	10	.147
Carlyle, Buddy	5-2	2.59	9	9	0	48.2	40	15	14	9	56	.225
Cormier, Lance	1-1	6.65	6	6	0	23.0	33	18	17	8	14	.347
Hernandez, Buddy	6-3	2.19	30	1	2	49.1	47	16	12	9	44	.250
Hodges, Trey	3-3	3.84	18	12	1	75.0	64	32	32	37	50	.238
Johnson, Jonathan	1-4	6.45	10	9	0	44.2	57	33	32	21	26	.322
Scalamandre, Rich	0-4	5.40	19	0	1	31.2	36	23	19	11	15	.298
Smith, Dan	3-2	4.78	5	4	0	26.1	27	14	14	16	11	.273
Startup, Will	3-2	2.41	35	0	1	41.0	33	11	11	16	38	.224
Winkelsas, Joe	1-0	3.97	5	0	0	11.1	10	6	5	5	7	.250

MISSISSIPPI 50-41

SOUTHERN LEAGUE AA | TRUSTMARK PARK (601) 664-7600

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Burrus, Josh (OF)	.192	58	156	17	30	3	0	3	23	23	52	5
Creek, Greg (1B)	.255	66	216	28	55	15	0	1	17	27	53	2
Esquivel, Matt (OF)	.251	89	342	60	86	16	2	16	63	38	84	14
Hernandez, Diory (INF)	.318	68	255	29	81	15	1	5	38	14	35	13
Holt, J.C. (2B)	.314	48	194	28	61	7	0	0	7	21	42	11
Jones, Brandon (OF)	.289	88	343	55	99	19	5	13	67	41	79	12
Jurich, Mark (1B/OF)	.283	71	230	32	65	23	1	5	43	24	41	1
Lillibridge, Brent (SS)	.275	52	204	31	56	8	3	3	17	20	60	14
Loadenthal, Carl (OF)	.301	84	312	51	94	9	2	0	21	43	45	30
Pope, Van (3B)	.212	77	269	29	57	16	4	4	28	19	45	7
Rozema, Mike (INF)	.262	43	141	19	37	4	2	4	17	12	30	5
Saltalamacchia, Jarrod (C)	.309	22	81	18	25	7	0	6	13	13	17	2
Sammons, Clint (C)	.226	45	168	12	38	7	0	3	23	9	35	0
Serrano, Ray (C)	.341	22	82	17	28	10	2	2	12	6	11	2

PITCHER	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Ascanio, Jose	2-0	2.48	32	1	4	65.1	54	21	18	16	53	.229
Basner, Ryan	0-0	0.00	7	0	0	12.0	6	1	0	4	9	.143
Bueno, Francisley	3-4	3.59	15	14	0	77.2	88	38	31	22	59	.285
Bullock, Tyler	1-0	7.36	9	0	0	18.1	24	21	15	9	8	.333
Devine, Joey	2-4	2.06	33	0	16	35.0	26	9	8	13	51	.211
Harrison, Matt	5-4	3.23	17	17	0	97.2	97	42	35	28	61	.261
Hernandez, Moises	0-1	9.82	3	3	0	14.2	19	18	16	9	8	.306
Morton, Charlie	4-4	4.41	28	2	0	49.0	52	25	24	28	43	.280
Nelson, Brad	3-1	4.50	16	3	0	44.0	47	24	22	11	22	.273
Nix, Michael	4-4	2.18	28	0	0	45.1	40	17	11	18	48	.238
Parr, James	2-2	4.09	8	8	0	44.0	45	20	20	10	39	.271
Reyes, Jo-Jo	8-1	3.56	13	13	0	73.1	63	31	29	35	71	.240
Schreiber, Zach	3-5	2.22	34	0	5	44.2	26	13	11	22	38	.173
Smith, Dan	4-2	1.94	9	9	0	51.0	37	14	11	20	41	.204
Villa, Kelvin	6-6	5.09	18	18	0	92.0	108	58	52	42	75	.296
Winkelsas, Joe	1-2	2.55	14	0	0	24.2	22	13	7	9	21	.232

MYRTLE BEACH 40-48

CAROLINA LEAGUE ADVANCED A | COASTAL FEDERAL FIELD (843) 918-6002

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Alvarez, Roberto (OF)	.276	66	243	30	67	10	2	4	30	16	46	4
Andrus, Elvis (SS)	.241	82	320	48	77	16	3	3	33	38	73	21
Arnold, Derrick (INF)	.234	60	188	24	44	7	1	1	10	8	35	7
Bennett, Paul (INF)	.265	44	132	18	35	8	1	1	11	26	44	7
Cabrera, Willie (OF)	.224	24	85	8	19	0	0	1	6	6	7	2
Camarena, Jose (C)	.249	58	201	19	50	10	0	5	28	18	54	2
Campbell, Eric (3B)	.220	53	205	34	45	6	0	10	33	22	29	6
Davis, Quentin(OF)	.254	83	303	31	77	7	4	1	40	19	45	29
Hernandez, Diory (2B)	.313	17	64	9	20	8	2	0	9	2	11	2
Kaaihue, Kala (1B)	.288	78	271	49	78	16	1	19	52	49	82	2
Roberts, J.D. (OF)	.194	57	186	13	36	8	0	1	16	13	53	1
Rozema, Mike (INF)	.294	20	68	10	20	1	1	2	15	9	13	1
Sammons, Clint (C)	.269	23	78	13	21	6	0	4	13	10	14	1
Schafer, Jordan (OF)	.294	57	235	39	69	17	7	5	27	22	57	10
Verastegui, Jerry (C)	.239	21	67	7	16	3	0	0	7	7	13	0
Young, Matt (OF/2B)	.269	59	219	25	59	7	2	1	16	34	34	12

PITCHER	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Acosta, Jorge	1-2	6.27	19	0	0	33.0	33	27	23	29	33	.266
Bullock, Tyler	1-1	7.65	18	0	1	20.0	24	19	17	16	17	.300
Cho, Jang Ji	1-1	7.32	12	0	0	19.2	25	17	16	11	11	.305
Cuevas, Jairo	5-8	3.99	17	17	0	88.0	70	46	39	43	88	.211
Evans, Dustin	1-4	4.58	11	11	0	55.0	57	32	28	19	41	.273
Gunderson, Kevin	2-4	3.38	30	0	7	37.1	38	19	14	24	31	.266
Hernandez, Moises	10-3	3.66	15	15	0	91.0	94	43	37	26	51	.265
Jung, Sung Ki	0-1	1.93	19	0	11	23.1	13	5	5	9	31	.167
Parr, James	3-4	3.18	8	8	0	39.2	36	14	14	6	37	.252
Payano, Nelson	2-4	3.50	28	1	0	43.2	29	21	17	42	59	.193
Sencion, Carlos	1-1	3.75	8	3	0	24.0	26	12	10	24	18	.280
Stanley, Adam	3-1	5.55	25	0	1	48.2	53	30	30	32	25	.276
Stevens, Jake	5-7	5.78	18	12	0	71.2	84	51	46	35	40	.299
Valenzuela, Sergio	0-0	6.88	18	2	0	35.1	47	33	27	18	19	.318
Venters, Jonathan	2-3	3.08	15	10	1	73.0	55	34	25	32	57	.210
Vines, Chris	0-3	11.66	6	5	0	14.2	26	20	19	12	8	.413

ROME 36-53

SOUTH ATLANTIC LEAGUE CLASS A | STATE MUTUAL STADIUM (706) 368-9388

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Brezeale, Danny (3B)	.225	76	258	34	58	19	0	5	35	9	77	1
Britton, Phillip (C)	.255	51	188	30	48	11	2	3	20	5	24	2
Cabrera, Willie (OF)	.255	57	231	24	59	16	0	3	26	9	23	1
Flowers, Tyler (1B/C)	.263	58	209	32	55	14	2	5	33	24	41	2
Fontaine, Chase (2B/SS)	.286	79	269	47	77	12	4	3	23	45	64	8
Hernandez, Victor (C)	.253	30	91	4	23	4	0	0	8	6	19	1
Lundahl, Chad (INF)	.218	78	275	28	60	10	0	3	32	16	57	0
Marcial, Robert (INF)	.273	38	128	15	35	5	0	1	14	7	22	3
Miles, Cole (2B)	.245	16	53	6	13	1	0	0	2	5	10	4
Monk, Brandon (INF)	.174	19	69	4	12	4	0	0	6	2	17	0
Morris, Joshua (1B)	.165	34	121	11	20	8	0	1	10	12	36	0
Owings, Jon (OF)	.232	63	228	32	53	8	1	8	24	20	57	6
Rodriguez, Concepcion (OF)	.205	75	263	33	54	17	0	6	31	36	51	5
Schafer, Jordan (OF)	.372	30	129	16	48	15	2	5	20	16	31	4
Silva, Yohan (OF)	.228	56	184	31	42	6	2	5	21	27	40	1
Williams, Larry (1B/OF)	.258	78	298	19	77	13	2	2	28	23	51	1

PITCHER	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Broadway, Michael	5-4	5.75	18	2	0	40.2	55	31	26	15	20	.324
Chapman, Jaye	1-1	7.80	10	0	0	15.0	18	13	13	4	9	.290
Cofield, Kyle	4-6	3.81	18	9	1	78.0	63	36	33	32	64	.223
Curtis, James	2-3	5.06	14	0	1	21.1	30	15	12	10	16	.349
Gustafson, Timothy	2-8	4.77	18	17	0	94.1	113	64	50	29	80	.305
Hanson, Thomas	2-6	2.59	15	14	0	73.0	51	28	21	26	90	.194
Heath, Deunte	2-3	2.03	16	9	0	71.0	59	19	16	19	47	.225
Johnson, Joseph	1-1	4.87	17	0	0	20.1	24	12	11	15	20	.304
Jones, Beau	2-0	3.79	16	0	2	35.2	30	15	15	9	31	.224
Lyman, Jeffrey	4-8	4.55	18	18	0	93.0	108	57	47	35	73	.291
Medlen, Kris	0-1	0.87	17	0	8	20.2	13	4	2	3	33	.169
Reynoso , Ryne	3-3	2.20	24	0	2	41.0	32	13	10	22	48	.218
Richmond, Jamie	3-4	3.12	17	17	0	89.1	95	47	31	21	65	.265
Sencion, Carlos	2-1	3.72	14	0	0	38.2	31	19	16	17	50	.215
Valenzuela, Sergio	0-1	5.11	5	0	0	12.1	17	8	7	4	10	.340
Wilson, Tyler	3-3	5.12	24	0	2	31.2	33	19	18	21	50	.268

DANVILLE 12-7

APPALACHIAN LEAGUE
ROOKIE ADVANCED

LEGION FIELD
(434) 797-3792

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Anderson, Chris (C)	.222	5	9	4	2	1	0	0	1	7	3	0
Carmona, Eliazar (OF)	.263	13	19	6	5	1	0	0	2	2	4	1
Coe, Adam (3B)	.296	17	71	11	21	8	0	2	10	5	13	1
Dominguez, Javier (C/OF)	.256	11	39	6	10	3	1	0	2	1	10	0
Fisher, Michael (SS)	.338	17	71	13	24	7	1	2	17	7	17	0
Garcia, Steven (C)	.250	3	8	0	2	1	0	0	2	0	3	0
Hicks, Brandon (SS)	.138	11	29	11	4	0	1	1	7	12	12	1
Johnson, Cody (OF)	.339	14	59	11	20	5	1	4	14	6	13	0
Jones, Travis (2B)	.250	12	44	7	11	2	0	0	4	6	8	1
Lee, Carlos (OF)	.267	18	60	14	16	4	1	0	6	5	11	0
Mejia, Ernesto (1B)	.385	16	65	12	25	5	2	3	15	4	15	2
Miles, Cole (2B)	.373	16	67	12	25	3	2	1	13	5	6	1
Morris, Joshua (1B)	.333	10	39	2	13	3	0	1	7	1	5	0
Parliament, Adam (OF)	.292	11	24	5	7	1	0	0	4	4	6	0
Shults, Stephen (OF/3B)	.302	15	53	17	16	6	0	2	8	5	14	0
Stevens, Jeff (C)	.448	10	29	5	13	3	0	0	6	1	4	0

PITCHER	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Butts, Brett	2-0	0.93	4	0	0	9.2	7	4	1	3	8	.194
Castro, Yeliar	1-1	6.55	5	1	0	11.0	14	8	8	5	6	.333
Feliz, Neftali	2-0	1.20	4	3	0	15.0	9	3	2	6	17	.180
Fellman, Nicholas	1-0	2.79	6	0	3	9.2	4	3	3	4	14	.121
Gearrin, Cory	0-1	15.75	5	0	0	4.0	5	7	7	4	6	.294
Ladd, Tim	0-0	8.59	4	0	0	7.1	12	8	7	8	9	.375
Locke, Jeffrey	1-1	5.89	5	4	1	18.1	20	16	12	3	22	.267
Mehlich, Michael	0-0	1.93	3	0	0	4.2	3	2	1	4	6	.167
Ortegano, Jose	1-0	1.45	4	2	0	18.2	21	7	3	4	12	.280
Osuna, Edgar	1-0	2.40	4	1	1	15.0	18	6	4	1	21	.295
Palica, Thomas	2-0	2.08	4	1	0	13.0	13	5	3	6	15	.255
Ramirez, Wiliam	0-1	6.57	4	1	0	12.1	19	12	9	5	10	.339
Rodgers, Chad	0-1	4.20	4	3	1	15.0	13	7	7	3	17	.228
Rohrbough, Cole	1-2	1.26	4	3	0	14.1	17	5	2	4	20	.293

GULF COAST 5-13

GULF COAST LEAGUE
ROOKIE

THE BALLPARK AT DISNEY
(407) 939-2301

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Berres, David (OF)	.138	10	29	3	4	0	0	0	1	3	9	1
Dixon, Dennis (OF)	.143	13	42	5	6	1	0	0	4	8	13	3
Freeman, Frederick (1B)	.297	18	74	9	22	2	0	0	5	2	12	0
Fuller, Chais (2B/SS)	.179	12	39	5	7	3	0	0	1	1	7	0
Gilmore, Jonathan (3B)	.368	14	57	8	21	2	1	0	13	2	9	0
Gress, Randy (2B/SS)	.105	13	38	4	4	1	0	1	6	0	7	0
Hamaoka, Takumi (OF)	.290	14	31	5	9	1	0	0	5	1	7	1
Kennelly, Mathew (C)	.189	14	37	3	7	1	0	0	3	5	7	0
Maddox, Chadwick (OF)	.050	7	20	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	4	0
Miles, Kuyaunnis (OF)	.128	15	47	2	6	1	1	0	2	1	22	3
Parra, Camilo (OF)	.222	13	36	4	8	0	0	1	2	0	13	0
Shimabukuro, Ryohei (1B)	.182	9	22	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Sime, Samuel (SS/3B)	.368	17	68	16	25	10	0	3	15	2	13	3
Spiers, Joseph (2B)	.286	9	14	5	4	0	0	0	0	5	3	2
Sucre, Jesus (C)	.333	14	42	4	14	4	0	0	6	3	2	1

PITCHER	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Barrett, Eric	0-1	3.00	4	2	0	12.0	19	10	4	8	20	.365
Brewer, Caleb	0-0	5.59	4	1	0	9.2	10	7	6	12	6	.294
Davis, Kevin	0-0	1.04	5	0	0	8.2	4	1	1	7	8	.138
Figueroa, Steven	0-3	4.96	4	2	0	16.1	15	9	9	3	17	.246
Gonzalez, Raul	1-0	9.75	5	0	0	12.0	18	13	13	5	8	.353
Hyde, Lee	0-1	3.00	2	2	0	3.0	2	1	1	0	3	.222
Kent, Steve	0-1	6.23	3	2	0	8.2	8	6	6	2	13	.229
Lagua, Eligio	0-1	8.22	3	2	0	7.2	12	8	7	6	3	.387
Murillo, Eliezer	0-1	12.15	5	0	0	6.2	5	10	9	7	6	.192
Paulino, Angelo	2-0	1.46	4	1	0	12.1	7	2	2	3	13	.159
Rodriguez, Santos	0-1	9.28	4	1	0	10.2	14	12	11	6	16	.298
Rojas, Junior	2-1	5.00	4	4	0	18.0	21	10	10	6	18	.292
Shaffer, Jared	0-0	4.26	6	0	1	12.2	16	7	6	6	9	.308
Small, Matthew	0-1	5.68	4	0	1	6.1	6	8	4	3	9	.222
Stockman, Phil	0-0	7.20	3	0	0	5.0	5	4	4	1	9	.250
Wohlever, Terrence	0-1	13.50	3	0	0	4.0	8	6	6	1	7	.400

ings. Heath, a part-time starter, had a 2.03 ERA and allowed only 59 hits in 71 innings...

Replacing the three departed pitchers were **Chris Vines**, **Sergio Valenzuela** and **Jorge Acosta**, all of whom were sent down from Myrtle Beach. Vines is in his first year back from ligament replacement surgery on his right elbow that cost him most of the 2006 season...

Kyle Cofield, who rotated starting assignments with Heath, has moved into the Rome rotation. **Mike Broadway**, a hard-throwing righthander, has also joined the Braves' rotation after pitching out of the bullpen throughout the first half...

The Braves have received steady relief work from **Ryne Reynoso**. The Boston College product did not allow an earned run over seven outings, a span of 11 2/3 innings, from May 25 through June 22.

DANVILLE
ROOKIE ADVANCED

CODY JOHNSON, the Braves' first-round draft pick in 2006, opened some eyes with his tremendous power during the first three weeks of the Appalachian League season. Johnson hit .345 with four home runs and 14 RBIs in his first 13 games at Danville and drove in two runs in six of his first 13 games. Johnson struggled in his professional debut last year in the Gulf Coast League, hitting just .184 with a home run and 16 RBIs in 32 games...

Second baseman **Cole Miles**, a 19th-round draft pick in 2005, hit safely in six of his first seven games with the D-Braves, going 12-for-27. Miles, who opened the season at Rome, hit a home run and a triple while driving in six runs at Johnson City on June 25...

Third baseman **Adam Coe** was named the Appalachian League Player of the Week on July 8 after he batted .462 (12-for-26) with six runs, six doubles, a home run, six RBIs and a .808 slugging percentage. The 19-year-old's best performance during the week came on July 4, when he went 4-for-5 with two doubles, a home run and two RBIs...

Shortstop **Michael Fisher**, the Braves' sixth-round draft pick in June out of Georgia Tech, led the D-Braves with a .348 batting average and 17 RBIs in his first 16 games with the Appalachian League team. Fisher put together a 10-game hitting streak from June 29-July 8...

First baseman **Ernesto Mejia** had a game to remember on July 5 when he went 6-for-6 with four runs scored, two triples and two RBIs in a 15-3 win at Bristol...

Outfielder **C.J. Lee** grew up playing at Bristol's DeVault Stadium while attending Virginia High School. His homecoming after two years at East Tennessee State University and being drafted by the Braves in the 20th round in June included a 2-for-4 performance at the plate and reaching base three times on July 5.

GULF COAST
ROOKIE

JON GILMORE, Atlanta's second pick in the June draft, taken in the supplemental first round with the 33rd overall pick, started his pro career on a positive note. The third baseman from Iowa City High School had multi-hit outings in five of his first 11 games, including three hits with three RBIs on July 4...

First baseman **Freddie Freeman**, the Braves' second-round draft pick in June, hit safely in five straight games from June 26-30 and had back-to-back two-hit games on July 4 and July 7. Several teams scouted Freeman heavily as a right-handed pitcher out of El Modena High School in Orange, Calif., but the Braves believe his best chance for success will come as a hitter and first baseman.

GAME BY GAME

GAME	DATE	OPP.	H/A	W-L	SCORE	W/L PITCHER	ATL HRs	REC.	POS.	GB
1	4/2	PHI	A	W	5-3 (10)	Wickman (1-0)	McCann (1), Renteria 2 (2)	1-0	T-1	--
2	4/4	PHI	A	W	3-2 (11)	McBride (1-0)	McCann (2), Thorman (1)	2-0	2	- 1/2
3	4/5	PHI	A	W	8-4	James (1-0)	Johnson (1)	3-0	T-1	--
4	4/6	NYM	H	L	1-11	Redman (0-1)	Francoeur (1)	3-1	2	-1
5	4/7	NYM	H	W	5-3	Smoltz (1-0)	Diaz (1)	4-1	T-1	--
6	4/8	NYM	H	W	3-2	Soriano (1-0)	Johnson (2)	5-1	1	--
7	4/10	WAS	H	W	8-0	Hudson (1-0)	A. Jones (1), Francoeur (2)	6-1	1	+1
8	4/11	WAS	H	W	8-3	James (2-0)	A. Jones (2), C. Jones (1)	7-1	1	+2
9	4/12	WAS	H	L	0-2	Smoltz (1-1)	--	7-2	1	+1
10	4/13	FLA	H	L	4-11	Redman (0-2)	C. Jones (2), Pena (1)	7-3	T-1	--
11	4/15	FLA	H	W	8-4	Hudson (2-0)	C. Jones (3), A. Jones (3)	8-3	1	+1
12	4/16	WAS	A	L	1-5	James (2-1)	--	8-4	1	+1/2
13	4/17	WAS	A	W	6-4	Smoltz (2-1)	C. Jones (4)	9-4	1	+1/2
14	4/18	CHI	H	W	8-6	Villarreal (1-0)	Francoeur (3), Thorman (2)	1	+1/2	
15	4/19	CHI	H	L	0-3	Redman (0-3)	--	10-5	2	-1/2
16	4/20	NYM	A	W	7-3	Hudson (3-0)	C. Jones (5)	11-5	1	+1/2
17	4/21	NYM	A	L	2-7	James (2-2)	--	11-6	2	-1/2
18	4/22	NYM	A	W	9-6	Yates (1-0)	Johnson 2 (4), Renteria (3)	12-6	1	+1/2
19	4/23	FLA	A	L	7-8	Davies (0-1)	Francoeur (4), C. Jones (6)	12-7	2	-1/2
20	4/24	FLA	A	W	11-6	Moylan (1-0)	--	13-7	2	-1/2
21	4/25	FLA	A	L	3-4	Wickman (1-1)	Johnson (5), C. Jones (7), Diaz (2)	13-8	2	-1/2
22	4/27	COL	A	W	9-7	James (3-2)	A. Jones (4), Wilson (1)	14-8	1	+1/2
23	4/28	COL	A	W	6-2	Smoltz (3-1)	Francoeur (5), Renteria (4)	15-8	1	+1/2
24	4/29	COL	A	L	7-9 (11)	Colyer (0-1)	Thorman (3)	15-9	2	-1/2
25	4/30	PHI	H	W	5-2	Gonzalez (1-0)	C. Jones (8), A. Jones (5)	16-9	1	+1/2
26	5/1	PHI	H	L	4-6	Redman (0-4)	C. Jones 2 (10)	16-10	1	+1/2
27	5/2	PHI	H	W	4-3	Paronto (1-0)	--	17-10	1	+1/2
28	5/4	LAD	H	W	4-0	Smoltz (4-1)	--	18-10	T-1	--
29	5/5	LAD	H	L	3-6	Hudson (3-1)	--	18-11	2	-1
30	5/6	LAD	H	W	6-4	Paronto (2-0)	--	19-11	T-1	--
31	5/7	SD	H	L	2-4	James (3-3)	--	19-12	T-1	--
32	5/8	SD	H	W	3-2	Gonzalez (2-0)	--	20-12	T-1	--
33	5/9	SD	H	W	3-2	Smoltz (5-1)	--	21-12	T-1	--
34	5/10	SD	H	W	5-3	Hudson (4-1)	--	22-12	1	+1/2
35	5/11	PIT	A	W	4-1	Davies (1-1)	A. Jones (6), Francoeur (6)	23-12	1	+1/2
36	5/12	PIT	A	W	9-2	James (4-3)	Thorman 2 (5)	24-12	1	+1 1/2
37	5/13	PIT	A	L	2-13	Lerew (0-1)	--	24-13	1	+1/2
38	5/14	WAS	A	L	1-2	Smoltz (5-2)	McCann (3)	24-14	2	-1/2
39	5/15	WAS	A	W	6-2	Hudson (5-1)	Renteria 2 (6)	25-14	1	+1/2
40	5/16	WAS	A	L	4-6	Davies (1-2)	--	25-15	2	-1/2
41	5/17	WAS	A	L	3-4	Paronto (2-1)	C. Jones (11)	25-16	2	-1 1/2
42	(1 of 2) 5/19	BOS	A	L	3-13	Lerew (0-2)	Francoeur (7)	25-17	2	-2 1/2
43	(2 of 2) 5/19	BOS	A	W	14-0	Smoltz (6-2)	C. Jones (12), Johnson (6), Diaz (3)	26-17	2	-2 1/2
44	5/20	BOS	A	L	3-6	Hudson (5-2)	--	26-18	2	-2 1/2
45	5/22	NYM	H	W	8-1	Davies (2-2)	Thorman (6), Davies (1)	27-18	2	-1 1/2
46	5/23	NYM	H	L	0-3	James (4-4)	--	27-19	2	-2 1/2
47	5/24	NYM	H	W	2-1	Smoltz (7-2)	Diaz (4)	28-19	2	-1 1/2
48	5/25	PHI	H	L	3-8	Hudson (5-3)	--	28-20	2	-2 1/2
49	5/26	PHI	H	L	4-6	Carlyle (0-1)	Renteria (7)	28-21	2	-3 1/2
50	5/27	PHI	H	L	6-13	Davies (2-3)	Saltalamacchia (1), A. Jones (7)	28-22	2	-4 1/2

GAME	DATE	OPP.	H/A	W-L	SCORE	W/L PITCHER	ATL HRs	REC.	POS.	GB
51	5/28	MIL	A	W	2-1	James (5-4)	A. Jones (8)	29-22	2	-4
52	5/29	MIL	A	L	4-5	Moylan (1-1)	Harris (1)	29-23	2	-5
53	5/30	MIL	A	W	9-3	Hudson (6-3)	Johnson (7)	30-23	2	-4
54	6/1	CHI	A	W	8-5	Davies (3-3)	--	31-23	2	-3 1/2
55	6/2	CHI	A	W	5-3	Yates (2-0)	A. Jones (9)	32-23	2	-3 1/2
56	6/3	CHI	A	L	1-10	Cormier (0-1)	--	32-24	2	-3 1/2
57	6/4	FLA	H	L	4-6	Hudson (6-4)	Escobar (1), Renteria (8)	32-25	2	-4
58	(1 of 2) 6/5	FLA	H	W	3-1	Carlyle (1-1)	Saltalamacchia (2), Woodward (1)	33-25	2	-3 1/2
59	(2 of 2) 6/5	FLA	H	L	1-5	Smoltz (7-3)	--	33-26	2	-3 1/2
60	6/6	FLA	H	L	4-7	Davies (3-4)	--	33-27	2	-3 1/2
61	6/7	CHI	H	L	1-2	James (5-5)	A. Jones (10)	33-28	2	-3 1/2
62	6/8	CHI	H	L	1-9	Cormier (0-2)	--	33-29	2	-4 1/2
63	6/9	CHI	H	W	9-5	Moylan (2-1)	A. Jones (11), Renteria (9)	34-29	2	-3 1/2
64	6/10	CHI	H	W	5-4	Paronto (3-1)	Johnson (8)	35-29	2	-2 1/2
65	6/12	MIN	A	L	3-7	Davies (3-5)	Francoeur (8), Thorman (7)	35-30	2	-2
66	6/13	MIN	A	L	0-6	James (5-6)	--	35-31	2	-2
67	6/14	MIN	A	L	2-3	Wickman (1-2)	McCann (4)	35-32	3	-2 1/2
68	6/15	CLE	A	W	5-4	Soriano (2-0)	--	36-32	2	-2 1/2
69	6/16	CLE	A	W	6-2	Smoltz (8-3)	Renteria (10)	37-32	2	-1 1/2
70	6/17	CLE	A	L	2-5	Davies (3-6)	Thorman (8)	37-33	2	1 1/2
71	6/18	BOS	H	W	9-4	James (6-6)	McCann (5), Thorman (9)	38-33	2	-1 1/2
72	6/19	BOS	H	L	0-4	Hudson (6-5)	--	38-34	2	-1 1/2
73	6/20	BOS	H	L	0-11	Carlyle (1-2)	--	38-35	2	-1 1/2
74	6/22	DET	H	L	0-5	Smoltz (8-4)	--	38-36	3	-2 1/2
75	6/23	DET	H	L	1-2	Davies (3-7)	C. Jones (13)	38-37	3	-3 1/2
76	6/24	DET	H	L	0-5	James (6-7)	--	38-38	3	-4 1/2
77	6/25	WAS	H	W	4-1	Hudson (7-5)	McCann (6)	39-38	3	-4 1/2
78	6/26	WAS	H	W	6-2	Carlyle (2-2)	Saltalamacchia 2 (4), A. Jones (12)	40-38	3	-3 1/2
79	6/27	WAS	H	W	13-0	Smoltz (9-4)	McCann (7)	41-38	3	-3 1/2
80	6/29	FLA	A	W	12-3	James (7-7)	--	42-38	2	-4
81	6/30	FLA	A	W	6-5	Hudson (8-5)	--	43-38	2	-4
82	7/1	FLA	A	L	5-6 (10)	Soriano (2-1)	A. Jones (13)	43-39	2	4
83	7/2	LAD	A	L	2-8	Smoltz (9-5)	--	43-40	2	-4
84	7/3	LAD	A	L	6-7	Ledezma (3-2)	McCann (8)	43-41	2	-4
85	7/4	LAD	A	W	5-2	James (8-7)	A. Jones (14)	44-41	2	-3
86	7/5	LAD	A	W	8-6	Moylan (3-1)	Francoeur (9), C. Jones 2 (15)	45-41	2	-3
87	7/6	SD	A	W	7-4	Carlyle (3-2)	A. Jones (15)	46-41	2	-2
88	7/7	SD	A	L	5-8	Yates (2-1)	Francoeur (10)	46-42	2	-3
89	7/8	SD	A	W	5-4	Davies (4-7)	McCann (9), Johnson (9)	47-42	2	-2

ROSTER

As of July 12

PITCHERS 16+

38	Buddy Carlyle
26	Kyle Davies
27	Joey Devine
51	Mike Gonzalez*
15	Tim Hudson
36	Chuck James
49	Wil Ledezma
50	Anthony Lerew*
58	Peter Moylan
54	Chad Paronto
37	Jo-Jo Reyes
29	John Smoltz*
39	Rafael Soriano
56	Oscar Villarreal
28	Bob Wickman
33	Tyler Yates

*DISABLED

+ 13 PITCHERS ACTIVE

CATCHERS 2

16	Brian McCann
18	Jarrod Saltalamacchia

INFIELDERS 6

19	Yunel Escobar
2	Kelly Johnson
10	Chipper Jones
11	Edgar Renteria
20	Scott Thorman
5	Chris Woodward

OUTFIELDERS 4

23	Matt Diaz
7	Jeff Francoeur
22	Willie Harris
25	Andruw Jones

INDIVIDUAL STATS

Through July 12

BATTERS	AVG	SLG	OBP	G	AB	R	H	TB	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB	CS	E
Diaz	.353	.471	.375	71	187	18	66	88	10	0	4	19	7	29	2	0	2
Harris	.342	.441	.419	57	152	26	52	67	10	1	1	12	19	26	14	4	1
Jones, C.	.329	.594	.417	65	249	48	82	148	17	2	15	41	38	36	3	0	6
RIGHT	.291	.583	.342		103		30	60	5	2	7	22	8	12			
LEFT	.356	.603	.463		146		52	88	12	0	8	19	30	24			
Renteria	.319	.481	.384	85	335	56	107	161	22	1	10	45	34	52	8	1	7
Saltalamacchia	.315	.481	.364	38	108	11	34	52	6	0	4	11	8	23	0	0	3
RIGHT	.321	.604	.339		53		17	32	3	0	4	7	2	13			
LEFT	.309	.364	.387		55		17	20	3	0	0	4	6	10			
Escobar	.304	.412	.339	30	102	15	31	42	8	0	1	10	5	11	2	2	5
Francoeur	.289	.434	.329	89	350	40	101	152	21	0	10	58	20	67	1	2	3
Johnson	.287	.467	.386	83	300	55	86	140	15	6	9	42	48	63	7	4	6
McCann	.262	.438	.313	75	260	26	68	114	19	0	9	49	21	41	0	0	8
Woodward	.219	.302	.240	54	96	10	21	29	3	1	1	7	3	22	1	0	3
Thorman	.217	.391	.253	76	235	29	51	92	14	0	9	33	9	51	1	1	5
Jones, A.	.211	.410	.310	87	322	43	68	132	17	1	15	54	43	87	5	0	2
ATLANTA	.269	.423	.333	89	3,051	409	822	1,290	171	12	91	396	282	614	44	15	61
OPPONENTS	.265	.414	.333	89	3,040	408	807	1,258	151	24	84	383	293	596	57	18	53

Totals include pitchers' hitting

PINCH HITTERS (AVG-H-HR-RBI) **Harris** (.428-3-0-0), **Diaz** (.400-10-0-2), **Thorman** (.300-3-0-3), **Johnson** (.167-1-0-0), **Woodward** (.148-4-1-4), **Saltalamacchia** (.100-1-0-1), **Escobar** (.000-0-0-0), **Jones, C.** (.000-0-0-0), **McCann** (.000-0-0-0), **Renteria** (.000-0-0-0). **TEAM** (.214-27-1-13).

PITCHERS (AVG-H-HR-RBI) **James** (.214 -6-0-2), **Davies** (.200-5-1-4), **Hudson** (.189-7-0-2), **Smoltz** (.115, 3-0-0-0), **Carlyle** (.071-1-0-1), **Moylan** (.000-0-0-0), **Villarreal** (.000-0-0-0), **Lerew** (.000-0-0-0), **Yates** (.000-0-0-0). **STAFF** (.157-22-1-9).

KEY: AVG-Batting average, SLG-Slugging percentage, OBP-One-base percentage, G-Games, AB-At-bats, R-Runs, H-Hits, 2B-Doubles, 3B-Triples, HR-Home runs, RBI-Runs batted in, BB-Walks, SO-Strikeouts, HP-Hit by pitch, SB-Stolen bases; CS-Caught stealing; E-Errors. W-L-Wins-Losses, ERA-Earned run average, OBA-Opponents' batting average, GS-Games started, CG-Complete games, GF-Games finished, SV-Saves, IP-Innings pitched, ER-Earned runs.

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	OBA	G	GS	CG	GF	SV	IP	H	R	ER	HR	BB	SO
Devine	0-0	0.00	.250	2	0	0	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	2
Gonzalez	2-0	1.59	.246	18	0	0	5	2	17	15	3	3	0	8	13
Moylan	3-1	2.12	.209	37	0	0	9	1	46.2	34	17	11	4	18	32
Soriano	2-1	2.79	.174	40	0	0	13	5	38.2	24	13	12	5	8	34
Smoltz	9-5	3.07	.260	17	17	0	0	0	105.2	108	38	36	9	22	96
Hudson	8-5	3.54	.256	19	19	0	0	0	122	119	49	48	4	29	75
Villarreal	1-0	3.78	.249	30	0	0	4	0	47.2	44	22	20	3	17	44
James	8-7	3.96	.272	18	18	0	0	0	97.2	103	44	43	15	42	72
Yates	2-1	3.99	.222	42	0	0	7	1	38.1	32	23	17	2	17	38
Paronto	3-1	4.18	.309	35	0	0	9	1	32.1	38	17	15	1	14	12
Carlyle	3-2	4.50	.257	9	8	0	1	0	46	44	24	23	7	13	34
Wickman	1-2	4.80	.286	34	0	0	29	16	30.0	36	18	16	3	13	25
Davies	4-7	5.55	.268	16	16	0	0	0	86	90	59	53	12	41	59
Ledezma	0-1	6.43	.296	8	0	0	2	0	7	8	5	5	0	0	5
Lerew	0-2	7.71	.298	3	3	0	0	0	11.2	14	10	10	4	7	9
Reyes	0-0	15.00	.417	1	1	0	0	0	3	5	5	5	2	3	1
ATLANTA	47-42	4.27	.265	89	89	0	89	26	787	807	408	373	84	293	596
OPPONENTS	42-47	4.31	.269	89	89	1	88	20	785.1	822	409	376	91	282	614

2007 SCHEDULE

TENTATIVE; SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
FOR SEASON, GROUP AND SUITE TICKET INFORMATION, CALL (404) 577-9100 OR VISIT braves.com

JULY/AUGUST

TURNER FIELD | AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
29 4:40 PM AZ TBS	30	31 7:35 PM HOU SS	1 7:35 PM HOU FSN SOUTH	2 7:35 PM HOU TBS	3 7:35 PM COL TBS	4 7:05 PM COL SS
5 1:05 PM COL TBS	6	7 7:10 PM NYM SS	8 7:10 PM NYM FSN SOUTH	9 12:10 PM NYM TBS	10 7:35 PM PHI TBS	11 7:05 PM PHI SS
12 1:35 PM PHI TBS	13	14 7:35 PM SF SS	15 7:35 PM SF FSN SOUTH	16 7:35 PM SF TBS	17 7:35 PM AZ SS	18 7:05 PM AZ SS
19 1:05 PM AZ TBS	20 7:10 PM CIN SS	21 7:10 PM CIN SS	22 7:10 PM CIN FSN SOUTH	23 7:10 PM CIN SS	24 8:10 PM STL SS	25 7:15 PM STL SS
26 2:15 PM STL TBS	27 7:05 PM FLA SS	28 7:05 PM FLA SS	29 7:05 PM FLA FSN SOUTH	30	31 7:35 PM NYM SS	

SEPTEMBER

TURNER FIELD | AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 3:55 PM NYM FOX
2 1:05 PM NYM TBS	3 1:05 PM PHI TBS	4 7:35 PM PHI SS	5 1:05 PM PHI TBS	6	7 7:35 PM WSH FSN SOUTH	8 7:05 PM WSH TBS
9 1:05 PM WSH TBS	10 7:10 PM NYM SS	11 7:10 PM NYM SS	12 7:10 PM NYM FSN SOUTH	13	14 7:05 PM WSH SS	15 7:05 PM WSH TBS
16 1:35 PM WSH TBS	17 7:05 PM FLA SS	18 7:35 PM FLA SS	19 7:35 PM FLA FSN SOUTH	20 7:35 PM MIL SS	21 7:35 PM MIL ESPN	22 7:05 PM MIL SS
23 1:05 PM MIL TBS	24	25 7:05 PM PHI SS	26 7:05 PM PHI FSN SOUTH	27 7:05 PM PHI SS	28 8:05 PM HOU SS	29 7:05 PM HOU SS
30 2:05 PM HOU TBS						

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3 07 DIVISION SERIES	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11 07 LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24 07 WORLD SERIES GAME 1	25 07 WORLD SERIES GAME 2	26	27 07 WORLD SERIES GAME 3
28 07 WORLD SERIES GAME 4	29 07 WORLD SERIES GAME 5	30	31 07 WORLD SERIES GAME 6*	1 07 WORLD SERIES GAME 7*		

DIVISION SERIES — TBS & TNT
LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP — TBS
WORLD SERIES — A.L. HOME GAMES — FOX
WORLD SERIES — N.L. HOME GAMES — FOX
* If Needed

TICKETS

TO PURCHASE SEASON TICKETS OR FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL (404) 577-9100 OR VISIT braves.com

ASK ABOUT PRICES ON PRO-RATED PLANS

4-GAME PACK

Terrace Level.....$132
Outfield Pavilion.....$76
Upper Box.....$44

Labor Day Pkg: Aug. 31 (Mets), Sept. 1 (Mets), Sept. 2 (Mets), Sept. 3 (Philadelphia).

GIVE A GIFT CARD

Braves Gift Cards are available in $25 and $50 denominations and can be used to purchase Tickets, Concessions and Merchandise.

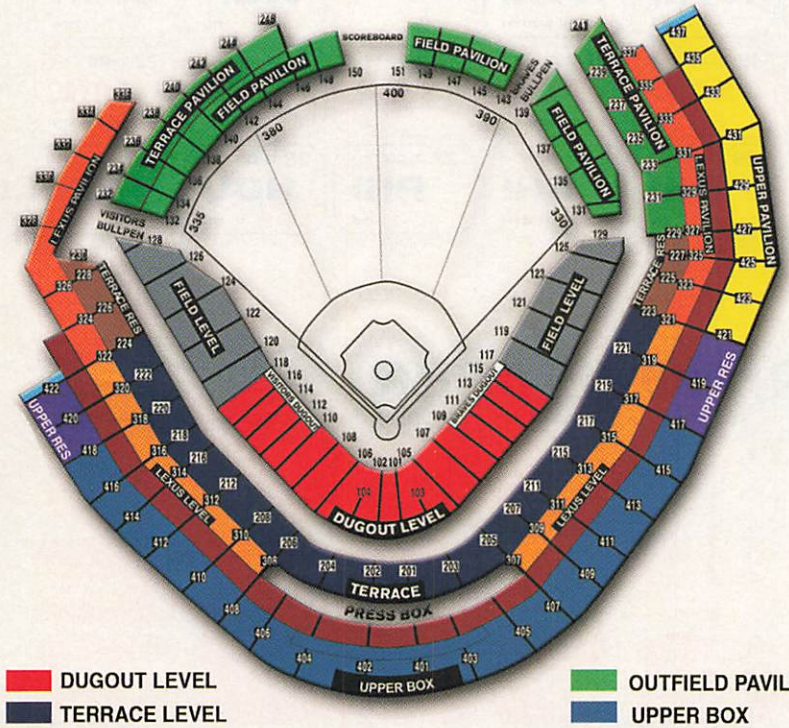
To purchase gift cards or to obtain more information, visit Braves.com or the Braves Clubhouse Store at CNN Center (call 404-523-5854).

FLEX PLANS

* Minimum 9 Games For As Low As $99

Location	Regular Price*	Flex Price*	Premium Price*	Flex Price*
Lexus Level	$36	$35	$40	$35
Terrace Level	$34	$33	$38	$33
Lexus Pavilion	$28	$27	$32	$27
Outfield Pavilion	$20	$19	$24	$19
Upper Box	$12	$11	$16	$11

* Per Game



- DUGOUT LEVEL
- TERRACE LEVEL
- FIELD LEVEL
- LEXUS
- OUTFIELD PAVILLION
- UPPER BOX
- TERRACE RESERVED
- LEXUS PAVILLION
- UPPER PAVILION

SPECIAL PACKAGES

GRAND SLAM PACK

"MasterCard Grand Slam packs" include 4 tickets, 4 hot dogs, 4 Cokes, a Braves yearbook and a parking pass! Available every Sunday through Thursday.

Location	Regular Games
Upper Box	$59
Outfield Pavilion	$79
Lexus Pavilion	$99

TWO-FOR-ONE TUESDAYS

Fans can purchase two-for-one Upper Level Reserved seats on "Coca-Cola Two-For-One Tuesdays."

OUTFIELD ADVANTAGE

Fans can purchase two-for-one Outfield Pavilion seats on "McDonald's Outfield Advantage" Wednesdays.

COLLEGE/MILITARY 2 FOR 1

Show college or military ID for 2 for 1 Upper Box seats.

TICKET INFO

INDIVIDUAL PRICES

Location	Gate Price	Premium Price*	Season Price
Dugout	$56	$60	$48
Suite	$56	$60	$48
Lexus	$36	$40	$32
Field	$34	$38	$28
Terrace	$34	$38	$28
Lexus Pavilion	$28	$32	$26
Terrace Reserved	$24	$28	$22
Field/Terrace Pavilion	$20	$24	$10
Upper Box	$12	$16	$10
Upper Reserved	$8	$12	N/A
Upper Pavilion	$6	$6	$3
Skyline	$1	$1	N/A

*All Friday and Saturday regular season games plus the June 18-20 series vs. Boston Red Sox

MUSEUM & TOUR INFO

The Ivan Allen Jr. Braves Museum features more than 500 Braves artifacts that trace the team's history from its beginnings in Boston (1871-1952) to Milwaukee (1953-65) to Atlanta (1966-present). It is located on the northwest side of Turner Field at aisle 134. The museum opens two and a half hours before each game and closes in the middle of the seventh inning. The museum is open year-round and is the starting point of one-hour guided tours of Turner Field. Tours leave on the hour.

Tour reservations are not necessary for individuals or groups of less than 20 people. Tickets can be purchased the day of the tour at the main ticket window. Free parking in the Green lot.

Admission to the museum during games is one token ($2) and $5 on non-game days. Tour tickets are $10 for adults, $5 for children and $7 for groups of 20 or more. Walk-up tickets can be purchased at the ticket window. Groups of 20 or more and school groups must make reservations two weeks in advance by calling (404) 614-2311.

HOURS OF OPERATION

APRIL - OCTOBER

Monday - Saturday ..... 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Sunday ..... 1 - 3 p.m.

OCTOBER - MARCH

Monday - Saturday ..... 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

DEC. 23-JAN. 3 ..... CLOSED

TOUR TICKETS

ADULTS $10

CHILDREN 13 and Under $5

*Subject to change

Tours not available when the Braves have afternoon home games

NEW FOR 2007
ALL YOU CAN EAT SEATS!

ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT-SEATS BASIC PACKAGE – $25

Includes ticket in Upper Reserved along first base side and access to All-Star Express stand at aisle 427.

Menu includes ballpark favorites:

Hot Dogs
Nachos
Peanuts
Popcorn
Coca-Cola, Diet Coke, Sprite & bottled water

ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT-SEATS LEXUS PACKAGE – $60

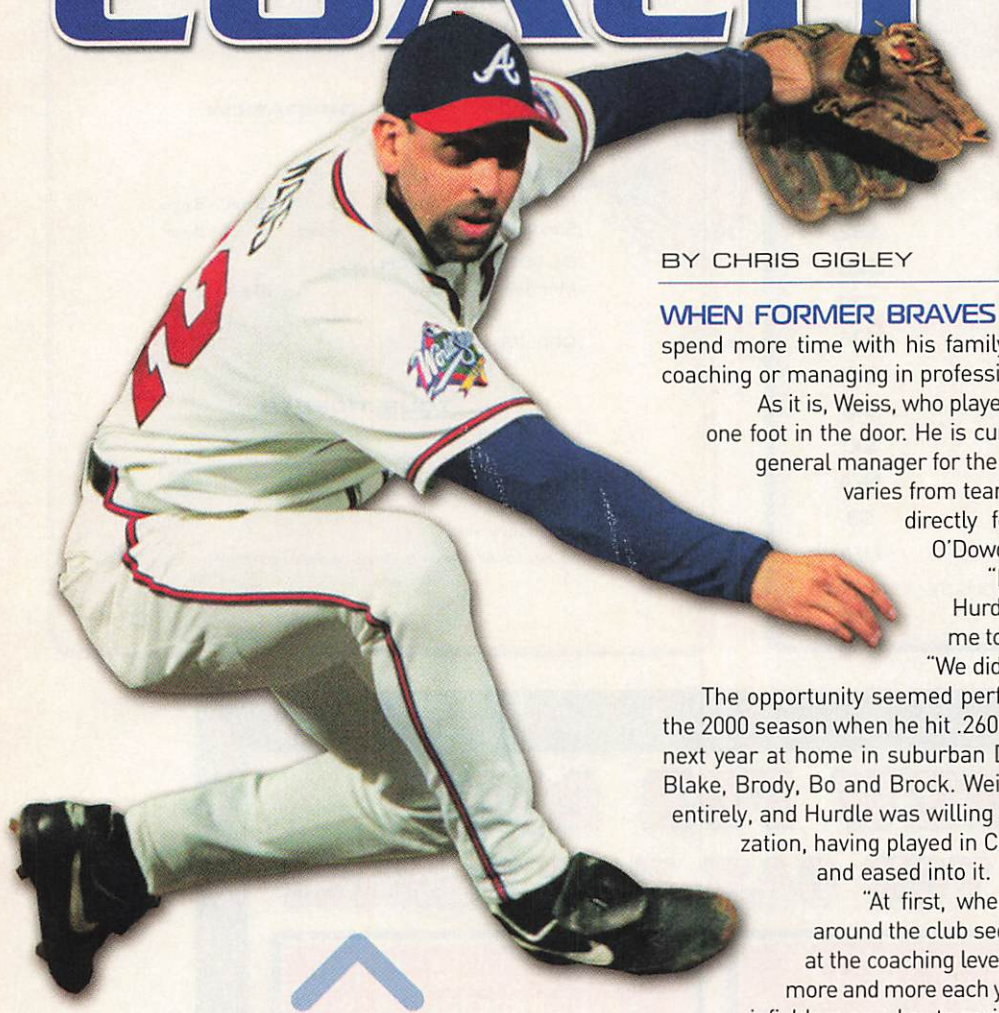
Includes ticket in Lexus Pavilion in right field.
Menu is the Skip and Pete's Barbeque package which includes:

BBQ Pulled Pork
BBQ Chicken Wings
Hot Dog
Cole Slaw
Baked Potato Salad
Corn Bread
Peanuts & Popcorn
Coca-Cola, Diet Coke, Sprite & Budweiser and Bud Light

Tickets can be purchased in advance at braves.com/tickets, 1-800-326-4000, any Ticketmaster outlet or Turner Field ticket office. Groups of 25 or more can purchase tickets at 404-577-9100 and receive recognition on Tomahawk LED board during the game.

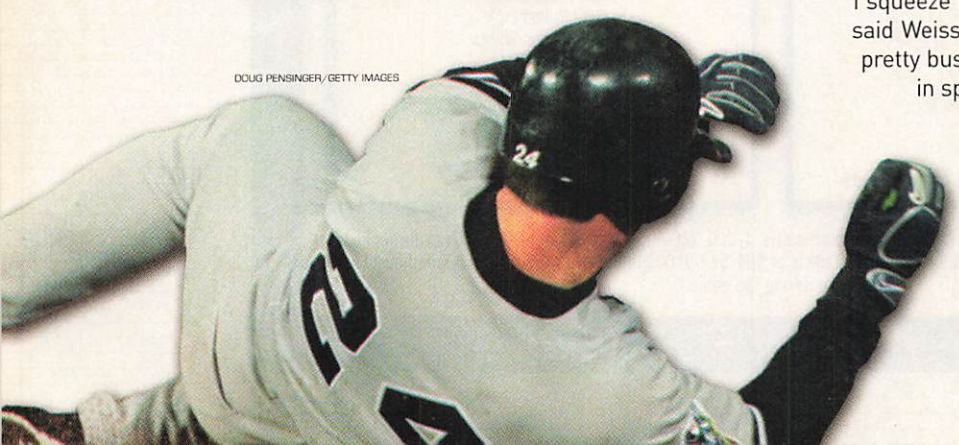
Rockies Allow Weiss To Work In Baseball Around His Duties As a Full-Time Dad

STAY-AT-HOME COACH



Walt Weiss juggles baseball and family as smoothly as he used to hurdle baserunners as a Braves shortstop for three seasons.

DOUG PENSINGER/GETTY IMAGES



BY CHRIS GIGLEY

WHEN FORMER BRAVES shortstop Walt Weiss says he wants to spend more time with his family, he really means it. Otherwise, he'd be coaching or managing in professional baseball by now.

As it is, Weiss, who played for Atlanta from 1998 to 2000, already has one foot in the door. He is currently serving as a special assistant to the general manager for the Colorado Rockies. It's a job title that usually varies from team to team. In Weiss' case, he neither works directly for, nor was hired by, Rockies GM Dan O'Dowd.

"In 2002, when [Rockies manager Clint] Hurdle got the job here, he called and wanted me to come back and do something," said Weiss. "We didn't know exactly what, though."

The opportunity seemed perfect for Weiss at the time. He retired after the 2000 season when he hit .260 in 80 games with the Braves. He spent the next year at home in suburban Denver with his wife, Terri, and four sons, Blake, Brody, Bo and Brock. Weiss, 43, says he didn't want to give that up entirely, and Hurdle was willing to be flexible. Weiss also knew the organization, having played in Colorado from 1994 to 1997. He took the job and eased into it.

"At first, whenever the Rockies were home, I was just around the club seeing what it was like to get back in the game at the coaching level," said Weiss. "From that point on, I've done more and more each year. I go out and work with our minor league infielders now. I go to spring training. I go to (fall) Instructional League. Around the draft, I go out and see a few kids we might draft."

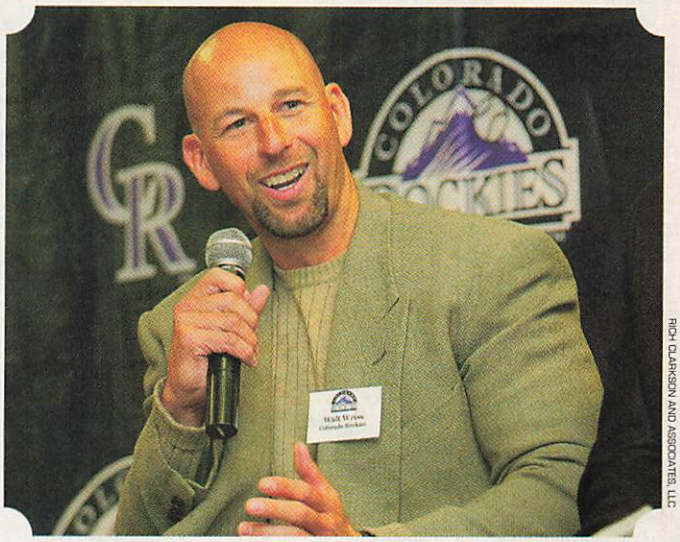
His downtime usually comes when the Rockies are on the road.

"I squeeze in a lot of the family stuff when the guys are gone," said Weiss. "But once the season starts in mid-February, I'm pretty busy balancing work and home, no matter what. I was in spring training (Tucson, Ariz.) for five weeks this year, and I had the family down for the last week. They were able to squeeze in some time with me at the ballpark."

When the regular season starts, however, Weiss doesn't bring his boys to the ballpark much.

"I'm always pretty sensitive about them getting in the way of the players," he said. "I try to

Weiss talks about his 2002 return to baseball as a special assitant with the Rockies.



RICH CLARKSON AND ASSOCIATES, LLC

respect that this is a player's time to go to work."

When Weiss isn't busy raising his own kids, he's helping the Rockies raise theirs. He's had a hand in helping a number of up-and-coming infielders in the minor league system, most notably Troy Tulowitzki last year. Hurdle credits Weiss with helping the Rockies' rookie shortstop become a smoother infielder, but Weiss downplays his role in that.

"There wasn't a lot to do other than getting him to move to the ball," said Weiss of Tulowitzki, who has the build and range of a young Cal Ripken Jr. "He has such a great arm that he sits on groundballs occasionally. But he was a lot more fundamentally sound coming in than I thought he'd be. At his size (6-3, 205), you'd think he'd be a little unorthodox, but he isn't. He's a true shortstop."

As Weiss enters his sixth season on the Rockies staff, his fans and friends in the game often ask when he'll start coaching full-time. The Rockies, he says, have already given him several chances to do it.

"I haven't made that jump yet because I still have three kids at home, and my youngest is four," said Weiss. "If I can, I'd like to be around to watch them grow up, play sports, and do whatever they do. But eventually, if there are still opportunities out there for me, I'd like to give it a shot. Being in baseball just feels natural to me."

With his oldest son, Blake, out of the house and in college now, Weiss is especially motivated to spend all the quality time he can with the kids he still has at home. What makes it all the more enjoyable for him is the fact that all three of his youngest sons play organized baseball.

"They love it," said Weiss. "But we don't ever talk about them following in my footsteps or anything like that. I guess they'll keep playing as long as they're passionate and their ability allows them to. No matter what they end up doing, I'll support them all the way."

What makes Weiss a good father to his sons will likely make him a good coach when the time finally comes. From his perspective, he sees plenty of parallels.

"I think the bottom line in a coaching position is you're dealing with people," he said. "You have to build trust and build a relationship before you can really get below the surface and make a difference with the players. It's the same thing with raising kids. You have to have trust there, especially when they hit their teenage years and get all weird."

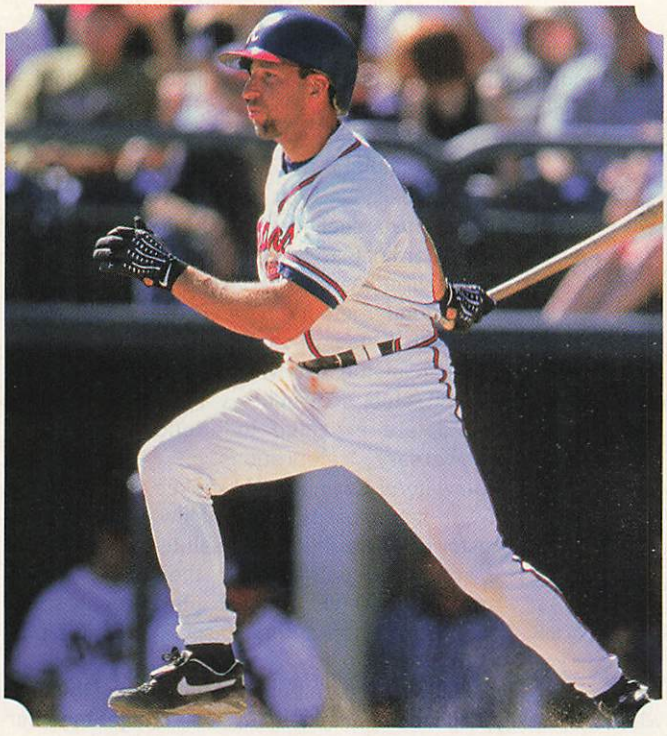
Weiss says he also will draw on his experience in Atlanta. He says his three seasons with the Braves were bittersweet for him. On the bright side, he played for two division winning teams and the 1999 National League champions, earned his first and only All-Star bid (in 1998), and made plenty of friends he stays in touch with to this day.

"But I had leg problems pretty much the whole time I was there," he said. "I feel pretty bad that I wasn't able to perform up to an acceptable level, especially for Bobby [Cox]. Bobby's so loyal, you want to give him everything you've got."

That loyalty Cox showed him is something Weiss has never forgotten. He saw how much it motivated not only him, but all his teammates. He says he can only hope to live up to Cox's standards if he does wind up managing.

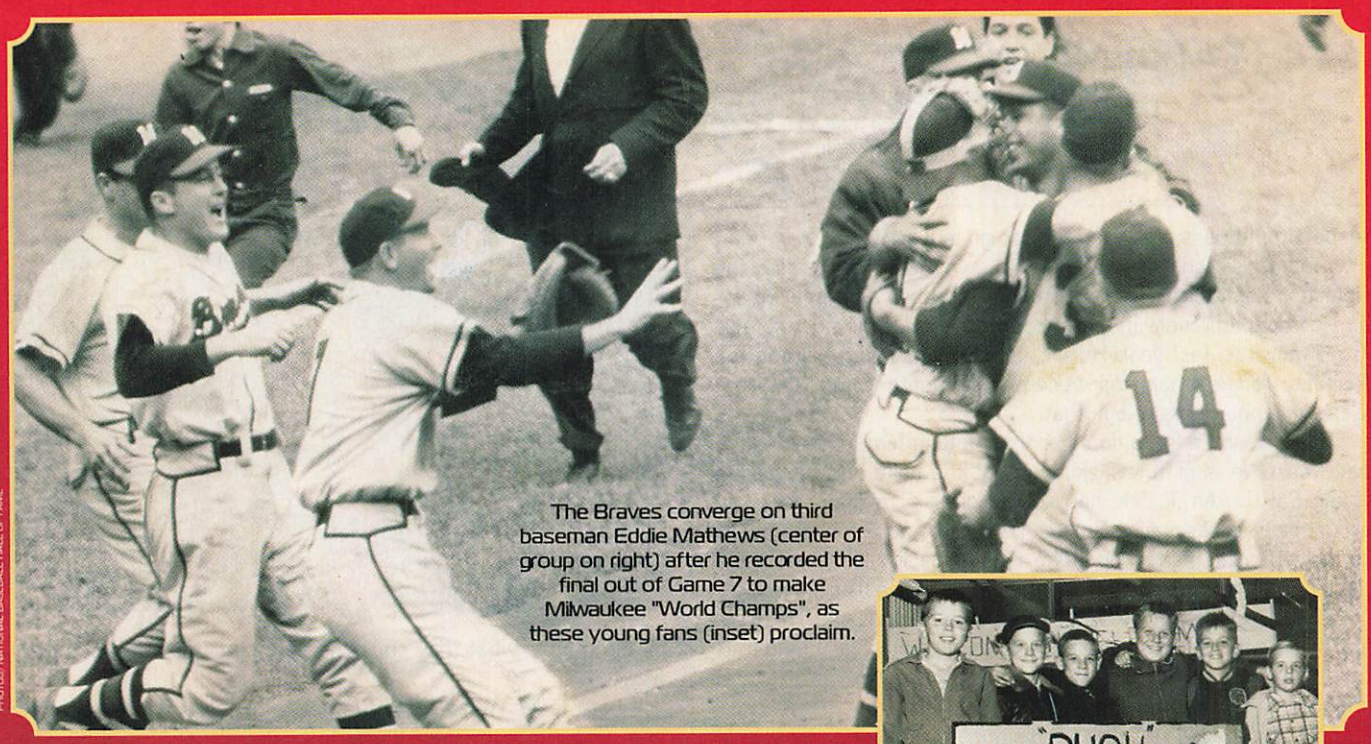
"I played for the best manager in baseball in Atlanta, and I got to see how you do it right," said Weiss. "To be able to watch and learn from that was a big honor for me."

Weiss, who signed with the Braves as a free agent after the 1997 season, played 14 years in the majors. He was the 1988 American League Rookie of the Year for Oakland and played on eight teams that made the post-season, including three World Series clubs. Weiss posted a .258 career batting average and was known for his excellent fielding, including one of the greatest infield plays in Atlanta Braves history - a diving stop with the bases loaded and one out in the 10th inning - to save Game 3 of the 1999 Division Series against Houston.



ANDY LYONS/GETTY IMAGES

As a Brave in 1998, Weiss made the All-Star team for the only time in his career.



PHOTOS / NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME

The Braves converge on third baseman Eddie Mathews (center of group on right) after he recorded the final out of Game 7 to make Milwaukee "World Champs", as these young fans (inset) proclaim.

MAGNIFICENT MEMORIES

Milwaukee Players Primed For Reunion, Chance to Re-Live Their Finest Hour

BY BOB BUEGE

FOR FANS OF THE 1957 Milwaukee Braves, the words of radio announcer Earl Gillespie still resonate: "The pitch to Henry Aaron... a swing and a drive back into center field, going back towards the wall. It's back at that fence and... Is it gone or not? It's a home run! The Braves are the champions of the National League! Henry Aaron just hit his 43rd home run of the year. Holy cow!"

It was 11:34 p.m. on September 23, to be precise, with two outs in the bottom of the 11th inning. Aaron's historic home run, which after the game and many times since the great slugger has called "the most important home run I ever hit," earned the Braves the right to play Casey Stengel's Yankees in the World Series. It also provided relief from the nagging pain of the previous season's second-place finish (by one game).

Reliever Ernie Johnson, who was inducted to the Atlanta Sports Hall of Fame on June 8, watched Aaron's blast from the center-field bullpen along with the rest of the Braves relief corps.

"We could see it coming. All we could do was help it - 'C'mon, c'mon, c'mon!' God, it was exciting," Johnson recalled.

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Milwaukee Braves' 1957 World Series championship. Throughout the year, ChopTalk will revisit one of the most-glorious accomplishments in franchise history with a series of stories about the people and highlights of this storied chapter in Braves history.

Felix Mantilla, meanwhile, enjoyed his old roommate's pennant-winning wallop from County Stadium's first-base dugout.

"I knew right away it was a home run," Mantilla recalled. "He hit it good."

"It was exciting for me," said Gene Conley witch a chuckle, "because I got the win." Conley worked one inning in relief after Lou Burdette held the St. Louis Cardinals to two runs in 10 innings.

Of course, Aaron's decisive drive is just one of many fond memories the Braves' ballplayers have of that magical championship season.

Sixteen of the surviving 22 members of that close-knit club, Milwaukee's only World Series champions, are expected to attend a gala 50th anniversary celebration on Aug. 30 at Potawatomi Casino in Milwaukee. The sold-out event, sponsored by the Milwaukee Braves Historical Association, will salute each of the 40 Braves who contributed to the 1957 pennant, from league MVP Aaron to players who spent only a small part of the season in a Braves uniform.

"It'll be just a tremendous thing," said the man who wore No. 1, catcher Del Crandall. "We used to get together

at those Old-Timers' games, but they don't have those anymore."

Unfortunately, many team members will be missing from the reunion. As Crandall pointed out, "I know it's a celebration, but it's going to be sad, too. We're not going to see some of those guys we spent years and years with in the Braves organization."

Some of Milwaukee's biggest heroes - Eddie Mathews, Warren Spahn, Bob Buhl, Joe Adcock - are deceased. A few others, like Frank Torre, who received a kidney transplant on May 1, are in poor health and not expected to attend.

Also missing will be Burdette, the star of the '57 World Series, who died on February 6. Burdette beat the Yankees three times, twice by shutouts.

"It's sad that Lou passed on before this reunion," Conley said. "He was talking about going. I saw him just a few months before that, and he seemed all right."

Yes, there will be touches of sadness, but every Milwaukee Brave interviewed is eagerly looking forward to Aug. 30. Crandall summed it up nicely: "Oh, man, it's gonna be a good thing."

Those who are expected to attend include Aaron and Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig. Though the event is a sellout, fans without a ticket can catch a glimpse of the '57 Braves during a ceremony (no admission charge) set to begin at approximately 5 p.m. (Central) at the Milwaukee Braves Monument at the former site of County Stadium, just outside Miller Park.

Storytelling will highlight the event, and there's bound to be plenty of praise for the contribution of second baseman Red Schoendienst.

"Red was steady," Conley said. "He was kind of inspiring."

Andy Pafko describes Schoendienst as "the glue that held our infield together."

"Schoendienst was the missing part," added Crandall, the captain and a Braves Hall of Famer.. "He gave us leadership. I can remember when he would practically run in to the mound and stay about 15 seconds and then sprint back to his position. I asked Burdette one day, 'What in the world does he say? It didn't take very long.'

"Lou said, 'He just looks you in the eye and says, 'Make him hit it to me,' and he runs back to his position.' That was just typical of his leadership."

For Conley, another of his teammates commands equally strong memories.

"Hurricane (Bob) Hazle," said Conley of the outfielder who was called up from the minors when Billy Bruton was hurt at midseason and proceeded to hit .403 in 41 games. "Each day I wanted to watch and see what he was going to do next. Without him, it would have been pretty close. I think he won half a dozen games by himself."

Winning the pennant, though, was the prologue. The post-season battle with the Yankees was the main event.

"A lot of us had never been in Yankee Stadium," Johnson recalled, "and that was really awesome. Anytime you perform in the World Series, that's something they can't take away from you."

Pafko found particular meaning in the World Series.

"I was fortunate to play on pennant winners with the Chicago Cubs and the Brooklyn Dodgers, but we could never win the big one," he said. "But then to have the opportunity to help my home state win a championship - you can't ask for more than that. That was my biggest thrill."

For Crandall, one mental snapshot captures the 1957 season.

"Burdette, Mathews, and I meeting right there between home plate and third base, toward the mound a little bit, after the final out [in Game 7] was made. Hey, by golly, we did it."

Beating the Yankees came as no surprise to the Braves despite their underdog status. "The whole team was confident," said Mantilla. "We thought we could beat 'em."

Crandall is equally emphatic.

"During that time, I think we were as good as any club there was," he said.

Conley agreed: "I think we had the best baseball team in either league."

It would be hard to argue with that statement. The 1957 Braves boasted four future Hall of Famers - Spahn, Mathews, Aaron and Schoendienst.

According to Johnson, manager Fred Haney's champions had something else besides talent.

"Camaraderie," he said. "Everybody on that ballclub was pulling for one another. It was close knit."

1957: THE SEQUEL

Aug. 17
Select members of 1957 World Champions honored at Braves Hall of Fame luncheon. See page 30.

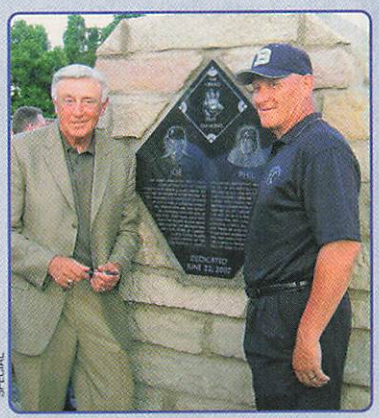
Aug. 30
50th Anniversary reunion of the '57 Braves at Potawatomi Casino in Milwaukee. Sold out.

Aug. 31
Eddie Mathews, Warren Spahn and former GM John Quinn inducted into the Miller Park Walk of Fame. On field ceremony prior to Milwaukee Brewers game.

Ongoing
Exhibits at the Wisconsin Historical Museum (wisconsinhistory.org) in Madison and at the Milwaukee County Historical Society (milwaukeecountyhistsoc.org).

ALUMNI NOTES

Delta Air Lines saluted All-Time Home Run King **Hank Aaron** (OF/1B, 1954-74) June 18 by unveiling a newly branded Boeing 757 in his honor. The plane, called the "Hank Aaron 755" and bearing artwork displaying his record-breaking 715th home run swing, was unveiled by Aaron and Delta CFO Ed Bastian in a ceremony at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.



SPECIAL

Phil Niekro (L) with Bridgeport High baseball coach Steve Wojcik at the unveiling of a monument in honor of Knucksie and his late brother, Joe.

The official dedication of Niekro Diamond at Perkins Field took place June 22 in Bridgeport, Ohio, in honor of **Phil** (RHP, 1964-83, '87) and the late **Joe Niekro** (RHP, 1973-74), the winningest pitching brothers (539 combined victories) in major league history. The ceremony included the unveiling of a monument (July '07 CT) bearing the likeness and short bios of both pitchers, who played on the field as youngsters. State senator Jason Wilson read a proclamation honoring the brothers, and the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference announced the creation of a baseball scholarship in the Niekros' name.

Hank Aaron (OF/1B, 1954-74) was scheduled to return to Mobile, Ala., his hometown, and the stadium that carries his name on July 22 to throw out the first pitch of the International Friendship Series between USA Baseball and China's Olympic team. Hank Aaron Stadium is the home of the Mobile BayBears, who are managed by **Brett Butler** (OF, 1981-83).

Greg McMichael (RHP, 1993-96, 2000) was the guest speaker at the Southern League All-Star Game awards luncheon at Trustmark Park, home of the Mississippi Braves.

Phil Niekro (RHP, 1964-83, '87) and **Gaylord Perry** (RHP, 1981) signed autographs at All-Star FanFest in San Francisco.

Pittsburgh traded **Nick Green** (INF, 2004) to Seattle June 20 for future considerations, and the Mariners assigned him to Triple-A Tacoma.

Dale Murphy (OF/1B/C, 1976-90) greeted children and families at Sports Hero Day in Provo, Utah, June 22, to benefit the Boys and Girls Clubs of Utah County.

Murphy's son, Jake (July '07 CT), committed to play college football at BYU and reportedly also will play baseball there.

Toronto gave **John Thomson** (RHP, 2004-06) his unconditional release, then Kansas City signed him to a one-year contract.

Pittsburgh designated **Dan Kolb** (RHP, 2005) for assignment.

Cleveland gave **Roberto Hernandez** (RHP, 2003) his unconditional release.

Fredi Gonzalez (Coach, 2003-06) was chosen as an All-Star Game coach for the NL.

Roman Colon (RHP, 2004-05) was charged with felonious assault and suspended by the Tigers for seven days after he punched a teammate at Triple-A Toledo during a locker room scuffle June 12 while he was on a rehab assignment (neck surgery).

BIRTHDAYS

AUGUST

1ST	FREDDY GARCIA (35)
2ND	PAUL MARAK (42)
3RD	SID BREAM (47)
4TH	JOE PIGNATANO (78) B.J. SURHOFF (43)
6TH	TOMMY REIS (93) ANDY MESSERSMITH (62) BOB HORNER (50) STAN BELINDA (41) KEITH MITCHELL (38)
7TH	RAY CRONE (76) BRIAN KOWITZ (38) **EDGAR RENTERIA (32)** **TYLER YATES (30)**
8TH	CLIFF SPECK (51) JOHN HUDEK (41) MATT WHITESIDE (40)
9TH	TED SIMMONS (58) DEION SANDERS (40)
10TH	GERALD WILLIAMS (41)
11TH	LUIS OLMO (88)
12TH	DEAN HARTGRAVES (41) ISMAEL VILLEGAS (31)
13TH	BOB GIGGIE (74) TONY CLONINGER (67) MARK LEMKE (42) ROMAN COLON (38)
15TH	JOEY JAY (72) JOE COWLEY (49)
16TH	MIKE JORGENSEN (59)
17TH	KELLY MANN (40) ADAM BUTLER (34)
18TH	BRUCE BENEDICT (52) TERRY BLOCKER (48) ALBIE LOPEZ (36) KEVIN BARRY (29)
19TH	LUIS GOMEZ (56) TERRY HARPER (52) NED YOST (52) MATT FRANCO (38) LANCE CORMIER (27)
20TH	CRAIG NETTLES (63)
21ST	JIM BEAUCHAMP (68) FELIX MILLAN (64) CRAIG ROBINSON (59) DERRIN EBERT (37) JASON MARQUIS (29)
22ST	MILT HILL (42) CARL SCHUTZ (36)
23RD	MARTY MARTINEZ (66) JULIO FRANCO (49) RANDY ST. CLAIRE (47)
24RD	EVERETT STULL (36) RAFAEL FURCAL (29)
25TH	ODDIBE MCDOWELL (45)
26TH	ALEX TREVINO (50) JEFF PARRETT (46) VICTOR ROSARIO (41)
27TH	ANDY PRATT (28)
28TH	TONY GONZALEZ (71) BOB HARTMAN (70) BILLY COWAN (69)
29TH	DAVE COLE (77) DAVE NICHOLSON (68) DAN SCHNEIDER (65) HENRY BLANCO (36)
30TH	FRANK FUNK (72) MIKE MCQUEEN (57) RANDY O'NEAL (47)
31TH	DANNY LITWHILER (91) RAMON HERNANDEZ (67) BILL NAHORODNY (54) CLAUDELL WASHINGTON (53) TIM DREW (29)

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ONCE UPON A TIME...

GEOFF PEARCE is the Bud Selig of Australia. Sort of. He's the president of the Australian Baseball Federation (ABF). There's no Major League Baseball Down Under. The ABF is the national governing body of the sport, and Pearce is its president.

Every time Peter Moylan works a scoreless inning, Pearce gets a big grin. Fortunately for the Braves, he's smiling a lot these days as the sidewinding Moylan becomes more of a dominant force in the Atlanta bullpen.

"It's like a fairy tale for us in Australia," said Pearce from San Francisco, where he was attending the All-Star Game. "Of course we're surprised at how well he's doing. He was just playing in our amateur club system last year. Now he's playing with John Smoltz!

"It's insane - Peter says it himself. It's lovely to see. It's the fastest we've ever had someone make it to the major leagues. He was 27 when he signed. Guys who sign that late tend not to last very long. I'm telling you, it's a fairy tale."

Pearce knows something about fairy tales. Besides being top dog at the ABF, he currently owns 17 companies, including Pearce Pharmaceuticals, the company that employed Moylan as a salesman before this fairy tale began to unfold.

Just how did Moylan go from selling plastic bottles, pumps, and raw materials for the pharmaceutical industry to "playing with John Smoltz"?

"Peter was playing first base on the same club I played with 35 years ago," said Pearce. "He's a powerful hitter. He led in home runs two years ago and was right up there in batting average, too.

"As an afterthought, we had him do a little bit of pitching, light relief. We knew he was fairly quick, but we didn't realize how quick until we got a call from our national team coach. He put a radar gun on him, and Peter was throwing 95.

"We were looking ahead to the World Baseball Classic, and we didn't have a pitcher that imposing, so we were thinking about Peter. We used him in a series against Taiwan, and he was successful, so we took him to the WBC as a light reliever."

That was last spring. In an outing against Venezuela, Moylan struck out three pretty fair hitters of major league pedigree named Bobby Abreu, Marco Scutaro and Magglio Ordonez. The Braves saw his work and couldn't get his name on a contract fast enough.

Moylan, who pitched at the lowest level of Minnesota's farm system in 1996-97 and hadn't sniffed pro baseball in nearly a decade, suddenly found himself at Triple-A Richmond. Before the year was out, he appeared in 15 games with Atlanta.

Now 28, Moylan failed to make the major league club this spring but got a quick call to Atlanta April 14 when Chad Paronto went on the disabled list. At this writing, Moylan hadn't given up an earned run in seven straight outings, shrinking his ERA to 2.08, best on the team.

On July 5 at Dodger Stadium, he relieved Tim Hudson in the fourth inning with a runner at third and no outs. Two groundouts and a strikeout later, the runner was still at third, and the Braves proceeded to win, 8-6.

"I go in every day knowing it could be the end, that I could be sent back down at any time," said Moylan. "I pitch every day like it's my last game."

Not that he fears having to go back to work for Pearce, mind you!

"I loved it," Moylan said of his pre-baseball career. "But I'll take this over it any day - and Geoff would, too!"

In the meantime, Moylan is happy his pitching is starting to become more of a topic with interviewers than his Australian heritage.

When asked the worst question put to him about being from Australia, he pondered: "Let me see... I don't know... There have been a lot..."

So one was suggested: "Does the ball spin the other way when you throw a breaking ball down there?"

"That's it! Put that one down!" he exclaimed.

No fairy tale ending, perhaps, but we'll leave that to Moylan.

This issue of ChopTalk was mailed July 20. The September issue will be mailed Aug. 22.

BEYOND BASEBALL

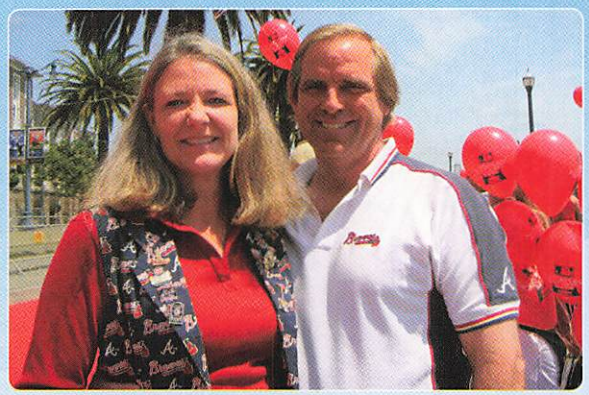
BY KIM HUDSON

Brian McCann with his fiancee, Ashley Jarusinski in her Debbie Clemens jacket, riding in the Red Carpet All-Star Parade (R), and Sherry and Howie McCann (below) displaying Braves loyalty at the festivities in San Francisco.

FRISCO FROLICS

ALL-STAR BRIAN McCANN was joined in San Francisco by his parents, **Howie** and **Sherry McCann**, and his fiancée, **Ashley Jarusinski**. The night of the Home Run Derby, the foursome went to dinner at the Cheesecake Factory. The group all stayed at the Westin St. Francis on Union Square and according to Sherry, "We walked everywhere. It was all so convenient."

The Red Carpet All-Star Parade led off the game day festivities. "The parade is one of our favorite things," said



Sherry. "The National League passed first, and Brian was the third player. They threw things, souvenirs and candy, out to the crowd."

Ashley wore a specially made jacket in the parade. It was personalized by Debbie Clemens, wife of Yankees pitcher Roger Clemens, who designs a line of sportswear. It read "Atlanta" and "Braves" down the sleeves in large rhinestone studs. The back read, "McCann" and "16", also in rhinestones.

AUTHOR'S RETREATS

WHILE THE TEAM was on the West Coast portion of the early July road trip, **Kim Hudson** and children **Kennedie**, **Tess** and **Kade** visited Kim's parents in Sanibel, Fla. Their trip was highlighted by a Fourth of July parade in which the kids collected their fair share of candy, and a fun boat trip in the Gulf of Mexico.

Over the All-Star break, **Tim Hudson** and family took advantage of his time off and spent a few days in Auburn, Ala, working on their new home. Tim also relaxed at his 770-acre farm, named Kenteska Plantation (after his children **Kennedie**, **Tess** and **Kade**). The Hudsons just finished building a small cabin on the 14-acre lake at their farm and are working on a larger cabin on the other side of the lake...

Could **Tim Hudson** have a television acting career in his future? Over the off-season, Tim filmed segments for both The Food Network's Paula's Party and Lifetime's Get Married. Tim and **Kim** traveled to Savannah, Ga., in January to film a segment for **Paula Deen**'s show Paula's Party (CT Feb. '07). The show is entitled "Atlanta Eats" and features Paula teaching Tim how to make a Coca-Cola glazed ham. The show aired on July 13 on The Food Network and re-aired on July 14, which happens to be Tim's birthday. Kim and Tim also filmed a segment at their home for Get Married. They discussed their engagement and wedding planning, and also shared pictures from their wedding album and video. Maybe **Jeff Francoeur**, **Brian McCann**, **Kyle Davies** and **Kelly Johnson** should watch the show to get some pointers, since they are all engaged to be married!...

Gloria and **Roger McDowell** and daughters **Amanda** and **Rachel** spent the break at their home in Palm Springs, Calif. On a day that the temperature hit 115 degrees, with the family unable to cool off in the hot pool, Roger went to the corner store and bought bags of ice to throw in the pool. They then had a BBQ and enjoyed swimming with the ice bags!...

Jonny Diaz, younger brother of **Matt Diaz**, attended the

EDITOR'S NOTE

SPECIAL

Tim Hudson is a starting pitcher, but this month, his wife is a *relief* pitcher. Kim Hudson reported and wrote this month's Beyond Baseball, relieving regular columnist Patty Rasmussen, who was on vacation in Germany, where her son, Capt. Matt Rasmussen, is stationed in the U.S. Army. Among Patty's activities there was celebrating her granddaughter Elena's first birthday, and participating in the Silver Spur Ride, a tradition in cavalry units during which wives and mothers go through a demanding crash course (above) in a soldier's everyday duties.

June 8 game versus the Cubs. After playing his freshman season of baseball at Florida State University, where brother Matt played, Jonny decided to focus on his Christian music career. Since graduating in 2005, Jonny has been traveling the country playing for churches, college ministries, and youth groups. He recently released his third full-length CD entitled "They Need Love."...

SOUTHERN CAL ESCAPE

At Disneyland: (L-R) Ashley Valvieja, Alma Valvieja Umalla, Toni Jordyn Umalla, Liezel Yates and her mother, Asun Valvieja.

TYLER AND LIEZEL Yates, both born and raised in Hawaii, hosted an extended family reunion for members of both sides of their families when the Braves traveled to Los Angeles and San Diego in early July. In Los Angeles, the couple was joined by Tyler's father, **Gary**, and Liezel's mother, **Asun Valvieja**, sisters, brother-in-law, and niece, who all traveled from Kauai. Also there were Tyler's grandfather and brother and Liezel's aunt and uncle, who all live in northern California. They all attended the Fourth of July game, Braves vs. Dodgers at Dodger Stadium, sporting Braves shirts with "Yates" on the back, specially made by Liezel for the event. While in Los Angeles, the group also visited Universal Studios and Disneyland. In San Diego, the group caught a few games at Petco Park and was also able to visit the San Diego Zoo and Sea World, to the delight of their two-year old niece, **Toni Jordyn**. The entire group also enjoyed a family dinner at an authentic Mexican restaurant in Old Town San Diego.

Taking advantage of the trip to Los Angeles, **Julie James** and **Liezel Yates** took a tour of Hollywood and Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills on a double-decker bus...

Kelly Thorman, **Jodi Orr**, **Liezel Yates** and **Ronnie Snitker** joined **Stephanie Clarke** and **Ericka Newsome** from the Braves' front office for a "Girls' Day Out" trip to Soda Salon in the Atlanta suburb of Roswell. The group was greeted by the Soda staff with a tour of the salon, which features artwork from local artists. After refreshments, each woman was treated to a make-up application and a hair consultation, with special tips on dealing with Atlanta humidity and the resulting "ballpark hair." The highlight for Ronnie Snitker, wife of third base coach **Brian Snitker**, was the pink extension put in her hair in support of breast cancer awareness. As part of its commitment to supporting cancer research, Soda Salon charges $20 for each pink extension, with $15 being donated to breast cancer research. We are delighted to say that Ronnie is a 14-year breast cancer survivor!...

On June 26, **Shari Langerhans**, wife of former Braves outfielder **Ryan Langerhans**, joined friends **Kelly Thorman**, **Jodi Orr**, **Leslee Diaz**, **Erin Woodward** and **Liezel Yates** for dinner at the 755 Club to watch the Braves take on Ryan's new team, the Washington Nationals...

Many of the Braves families made the trip to Miami for the three-game series against the Florida Marlins from June 29-July 1. The beach and the pool were frequented by the **Hudson**, **James**, **Paronto**, **Villarreal**, **Wickman**, **Saltalamacchia**, **Chipper Jones**, **Woodward**, **Snitker**, (baseball systems and bullpen catcher **Alan**) **Butts**, **Smith** and (trainer **Jeff**) **Porter** families...

Liezel Yates enjoyed a two-week visit from her sister, **Ashley Valvieja**, a senior at the University of Northern Colorado majoring in sports and exercise science. When they weren't busy putting **Tyler** and Liezel's new Atlanta-area townhouse together, Liezel treated Ashley to some Atlanta sites, including Stone Mountain Park and the Georgia Aquarium. This was an especially exciting visit for Ashley, because she has been an avid Braves fan since the team won the World Series in 1995, when she was only 13 years old. So when Tyler signed with the Braves, Ashley was ecstatic! It was a dream come true for her to watch Tyler pitch at Turner Field in person...

Tyler and **Liezel Yates** spent the All-Star break in Las Vegas with Liezel's mother, sisters, brother-in-law and niece. They visited the Shark Reef at Mandalay Bay and casino-hopped and shopped...

Shielda Groce, security guard at the Braves Family Room and senior paralegal for the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, Third United States Army, recently returned from duty in Kuwait. While there, she was NCOIC (non-commissioned officer in charge) of the tax center at Camp Arifjan. She and her 16 volunteers completed over 657 tax returns for service members and helped them save an estimated $75,000 in tax preparation fees and receive over $1,000,000 in refunds. For this, she received the Army Commendation Medal in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Braves family wants to thank Shielda for both her work at Turner Field and also for our country.

TOY STORY

(L-R) Kelly & Robbie Thorman, Jodi Orr and Minerva Escobar

ON JUNE 18-20, the Braves Wives held a Toy Drive at Turner Field to collect toys to be distributed during the Braves Christmas in July hospital visits. Many wives participated, including **Ronnie Snitker**, **Lynn Cadahia**, **Carmen Smith** (video coordinator **Rob Smith**), **Jessica Carlyle**, **Leslee Diaz**, **Kim Hudson**, **Minerva Escobar**, **Julie James**, **Kelly Thorman**, **Jamie Cormier**, **Karie Paronto**, **Ashley Saltalamacchia**, **Erin Woodward**, **Jodi Orr** and **Liezel Yates**. Braves players, coaches, broadcasters, and their wives will visit the three campuses of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta on July 17 to spend time with the children and distribute the toys.

TALKIN' CHOP

LETTERS & PHOTOS FROM OUR READERS

WHETHER YOU'RE HAVING FUN AT TURNER FIELD, EXPERIENCING A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH YOUR FAVORITE BRAVES PLAYER, OR JUST SHOWING OFF YOUR COLLECTION OF BRAVES STUFF OR TRYING ON YOUR NEW BRAVES SHIRT, WE WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT AND SEE A PICTURE.

PRAYING FOR RAIN!

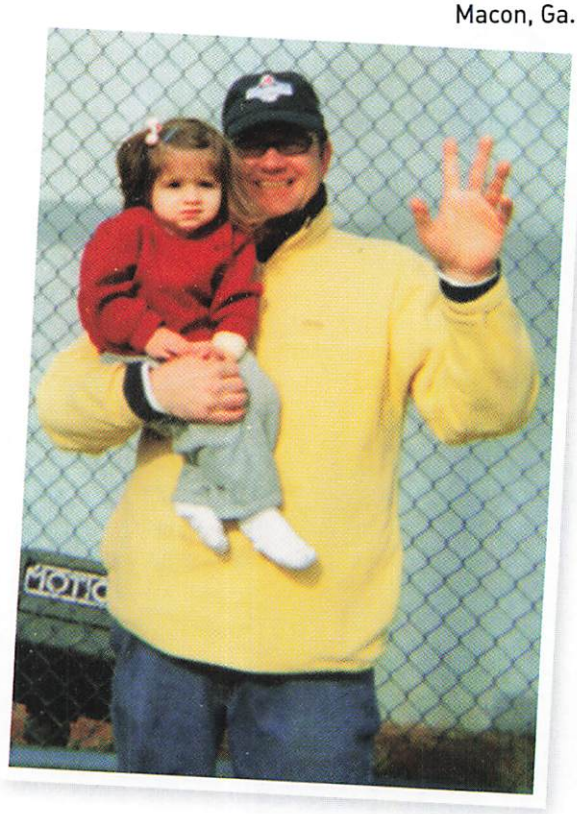
This is a recent picture of Lynda and Jack Tripp. We're ardent Braves fans, and we stop at Turner Field for three games every May. I've been a Braves fan since 1945 - 63 seasons - as you can see, dating back to Boston Braves lore of the 1948 pennant winners (Spahn and Sain and Pray for Rain).

JACK TRIPP
Taunton, Mass.

STARTING YOUNG

We look forward to receiving ChopTalk each month. I enjoy reading about the Braves teams and players of the past and present and the young guys down on the farm. Here is a picture of my daughter, Katie Lee (age 2), and me after Braves FanFest 2007. She has attended three games, and this was her second FanFest. I've even told her where her granddaddy and I were on the night of April 8, 1974 (when Hank Aaron hit No. 715).

CRAIG HULETT
Macon, Ga.



AN ATLANTA ORIGINAL

I've been a Braves fan since they came to Atlanta in 1966, and I've been receiving ChopTalk for a long time. In the '90s, I got this jersey signed by Kent Mercker at a silent auction and had it framed. My husband and I really love the Braves, and we're so proud of them.

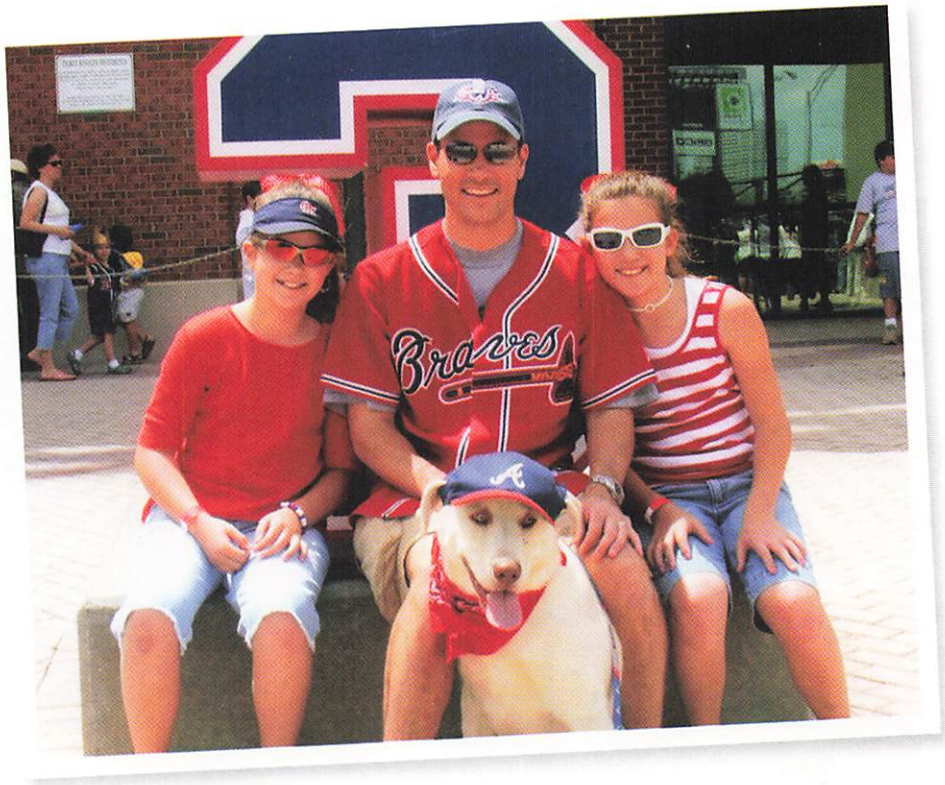
VIVIAN PERKINS
Thomaston, Ga.

CHOPTALK AND THE ATLANTA BRAVES SUPPORT OUR TROOPS

TRIBUTE TO NO. 3

My dad took us to see the Braves play the Dodgers at Turner Field on May 6. It was "Bark in the Park" day, so we took our Labrador, "Murphy." We stopped to get our picture taken in front of No. 3 (Dale Murphy) in Monument Grove. Murphy made lots of new friends in the puppy paradise set up in Sky Field. We all had a great time!

McKENZIE JOHNSON
Oxford, Ala.



JOLLY GOOD FAN

Thirteen years ago, I was introduced to the Atlanta Braves by my Alabama friend, Katie, whilst I was visiting your country. Since then, I've been hooked! I am sent a copy of ChopTalk often, and I eat up all the information in it. I've been to a game at Turner Field, and I'm glued to the TV, both in the UK and in Alabama, whenever I know the Braves are playing. I started in the days of my hero, Tom Glavine, and remain a fan now. Thanks to the Braves and Katie. I'll always be a fan!

MAUREEN SPEAR
Nottingham, United Kingdom

SHARE YOUR BRAVES FEVER!

WRITE TO US

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WRITE THE BRAVES

Atlanta Braves
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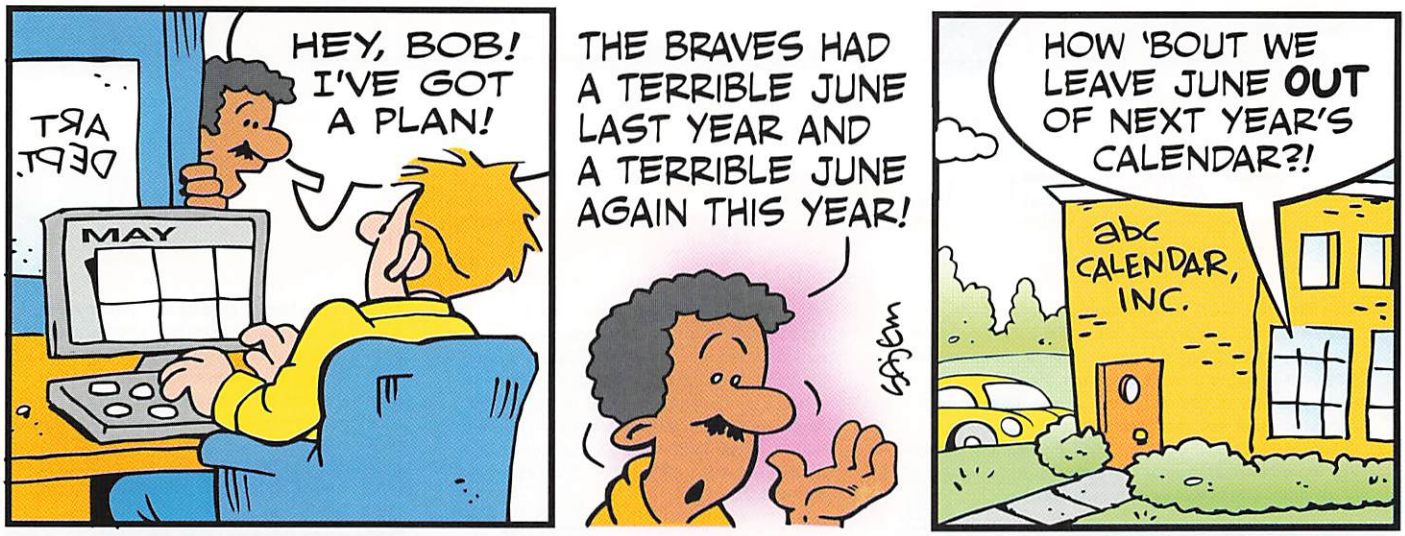
Atlanta, Ga. 30302

For the Braves players, Bobby Cox, the coaches, broadcasters, or members of the front office.

If you request a response, be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Never send anything of value that you want returned. This is no guarantee of a reply.

A FAN WITH A PLAN


HEY, BOB! I'VE GOT A PLAN!
ART DEPT.
MAY
THE BRAVES HAD A TERRIBLE JUNE LAST YEAR AND A TERRIBLE JUNE AGAIN THIS YEAR!
HOW 'BOUT WE LEAVE JUNE OUT OF NEXT YEAR'S CALENDAR?!
abc CALENDAR, INC.

POSTCARD FROM DEUTSCHLAND

EDITOR'S NOTE

ChopTalk reporter and columnist Patty Rasmussen recently spent a two-week vacation in Germany, as you may have noticed by reading this month's Beyond Baseball. Though Patty was a long way from the Braves, she still saw evidence of their popularity, as noted here.

PATTY RASMUSSEN

Between the incredible success of the Braves over the past decade and a half, their many years on TBS, and the ascent of Atlanta as a hip hop mecca where artists often "represent" by wearing Braves' caps and jerseys, the "Atlanta Braves" name is recognized worldwide.

Nevertheless, it was still a surprise to see a young fraulein wearing a Braves t-shirt strolling down the sleepy streets of Muggendorf, Germany.

Muggendorf is a small town, hundreds of miles from any major city. My curiosity got the better of me as I followed her into the town bakery. Between my limited German and her equally as limited English, I was able to figure out that a friend of hers visiting Atlanta gave her the shirt as a gift.

Explaining that I was a writer for ChopTalk, I asked if I could take her photo for the magazine. Our communication allowed for that much, but she declined to give her name. After I purchased pastry, she said, "Auf Wiedersehen," and was on her way.

Several days later, while visiting Neustadt, a town known for its lead crystal and porcelain, I happened to be walking through a crowd of high school students just getting out of school for the day. I was again surprised to see two young men wearing Atlanta Braves caps.

I don't know whether they were baseball fans or if they just thought it was a good looking cap, but it made this Braves fan feel a little closer to home!

Patty

BRAVES FANS
c/o CHOPTALK
ATLANTA, GA
U.S.A.

FAN CLUBS

BRAVES 400 CLUB

The Braves 400 Club is the official fan club of the Atlanta Braves. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting baseball at all levels. Annual membership is $25 and includes a newsletter and the opportunity to participate in activities such as road trips, luncheons, the annual banquet, and charitable events. Send payment to: Braves 400 Club, P.O. Box 7689, Atlanta, Ga. 30309. For more information, call the organization's hotline at (770) 416-4539 or visit www.braves400.org.

MILWAUKEE BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The Milwaukee Braves Historical Association is a non-profit organization that promotes the memory of the Milwaukee Braves (1953-65). Annual membership is $25 and includes a newsletter. Send payment to: Milwaukee Braves Historical Association, c/o Express News, W130 N10437 Washington Dr., Germantown, Wisc. 53022. For information, call (414) 347-1212.

BOSTON BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The Boston Braves Historical Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to keeping alive the memory of the Braves in the city where the franchise began in 1871 and that it represented through 1952. Annual membership is $15 and includes a newsletter. Send payment to: Boston Braves Historical Association, P.O. Box 5668, Marlboro, Mass. 01752. For more information, call (508) 485-1423 or visit Boston-braves.com. Oct. 7 - Annual reunion.

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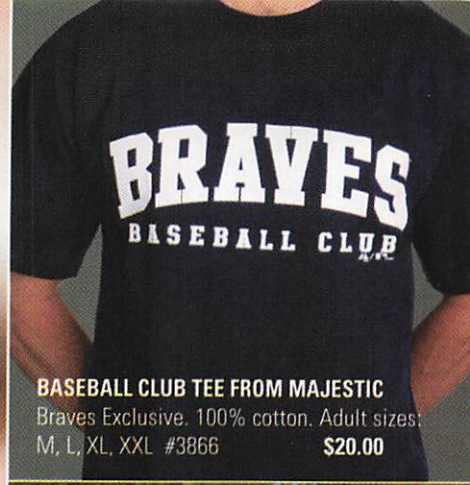

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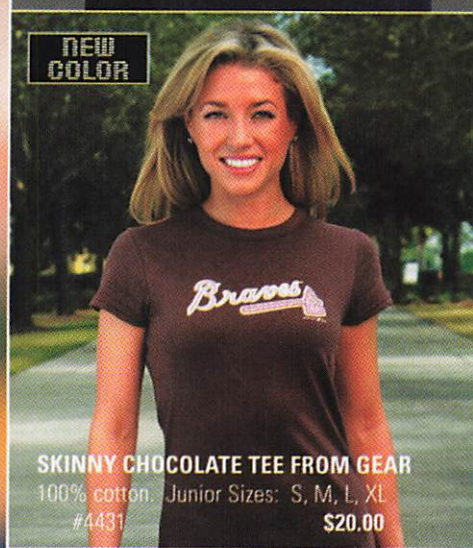

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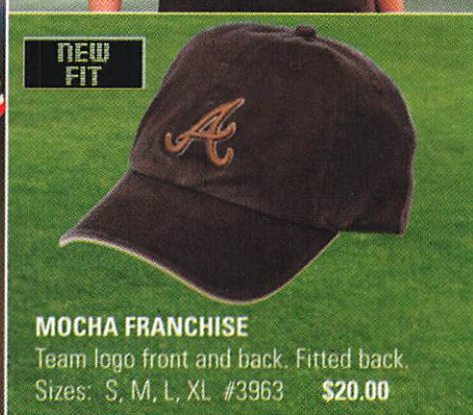

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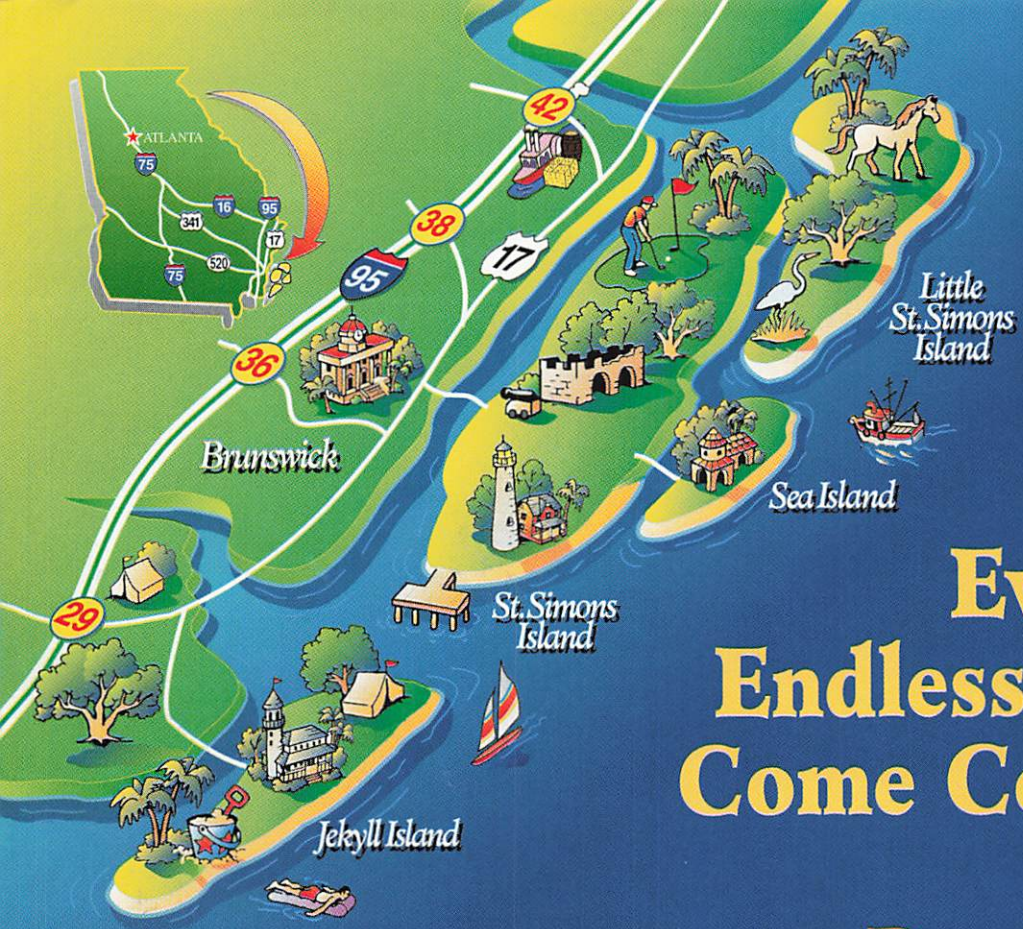

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